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THE UNCHASTENED WOMAN

A COMEDY

A 920,906

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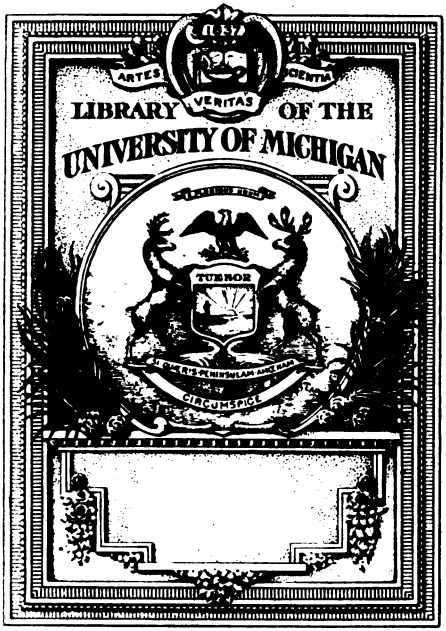
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Tristan and Isolde. A Poetical Tragedy.
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The Washerwoman Duchess. An Historical Comedy.
Our Children. A Modern Drama.

LOUIS KAUFMAN ANSPACHER

From the Painting by August Franzen

THE CHASTENED WOMAN

A Modern Comedy in Three Acts

BY

GUS KAUFMAN ANSPACHER

NEW YORK
FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY
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February, 1916

TO

KATHRYN KIDDER ANSPACHER

CAST OF THE FIRST PRODUCTION

BY

OLIVER MOROSCO

AT THE

Thirty-ninth Street Theater, New York City,

October 9th, 1915.

HUBERT KNOLLYS	Mr. H. Reeves-Smith.
MRS. MURTHA	Miss Jennie Lamont.
MISS SUSAN AMBIE	Miss Isabel Richards.
CAROLINE KNOLLYS	Miss Emily Stevens.
LAWRENCE SANBURY	Mr. R. Hassard Short.
HILDEGARDE SANBURY	Miss Christene Norman.
MISS EMILY MADDEN	Miss Willette Kershaw.
MICHAEL KRELLIN	Mr. Louis Bennison.

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

Arranged in the order of their first entrances.

HUBERT KNOLLYS.
MRS. MURTHA, *a Charwoman.*
MISS SUSAN AMBIE.
CAROLINE KNOLLYS, *Wife of Hubert Knollys.*
LAWRENCE SANBURY.
HILDEGARDE SANBURY, *His Wife.*
MISS EMILY MADDEN.
MICHAEL KRELLIN.

TIME: — The Present.

PLACE: — New York City.

ACT I

ACT I

The play opens in a morning in October. It is about ten o'clock. The first act presents the drawing-room of the KNOLLYS' *house, situated on a corner in the fashionable fifties, New York City. The room is spacious, but a little old-fashioned. Up stage, at the right, is a large arch opening on a hall, which leads out to the front door off stage at the right. In the center of the arch there are three steps leading to a platform, from which a flight of stairs rises, going left, and leading to the rooms above. The balustrade continues on a level with the stage, and indicates that the stairs lead also downward from the front hall to the basement. In the middle of the right wall is a large marble mantelpiece, with an open fireplace. Above the mantel hangs an old family portrait. On the wall below the mantel hangs an ornamental Venetian mirror. In the rear wall of the room, toward the left, is a mahogany door, leading to the basement. Between this door and the arch stands a large bookcase, filled with books in ex-*

pensive bindings. The left wall of the room is pierced by two large windows, with practical shades and blinds.

A library table and three chairs occupy the center of the room, under a heavy chandelier. There is a large divan chair with cushions and a foot-stool placed down left of the room. Set on an angle in front of the fireplace is a Davenport. Below this, also on an angle is a settle. Several of the chairs and the Davenport are covered with linen slips or sheets, which indicate that the house has not been occupied for some time. The size and visible appointments of the room must suggest the atmosphere of large, though rather formal, luxury.

The curtain rises on an empty stage. Dim light sifts through the closed blinds. There is a pause, and then the front door of the house is heard to open and close. A moment later HUBERT KNOLLYS *enters from the hall, through the arch, putting his keys into his pocket. He is followed by* MRS. MURTHA. HUBERT KNOLLYS *is a tall and distinguished looking man of fifty-three. He is dressed in a morning suit and a Panama hat. He carries a whisky and a couple of soda bottles under his arm. He also has a newspaper.* MRS. MURTHA *is an elderly Irish woman.*

HUBERT

Phew! It's close in here!

[*Goes to a window which he opens and lets in the sunlight, then he turns and looks at* MRS. MURTHA.]

Is your name Agnes Murtha?

MURTHA

No. That's me daughter. D'ye see, Agnes was comin', the Lord love her, but she had a fall yisterday —

HUBERT

Oh, too bad.

[*He begins removing the slips from the furniture.*]

MURTHA

[*Undoing her bonnet and showing her white head.*]

Yis — She's a foine eddication, so she has; but she bez a little weak in th' knee. So Oi came over mesilf, as soon as Oi heard from Mrs. Sanbury.

HUBERT

[*Seeing her white hair.*]

Perhaps you're not strong enough —

MURTHA

Oi'm as shtrong as ivir Oi wuz.

[*She energetically takes a slip from a piece of furniture.*]

HUBERT

The whole house must be got in shape.

MURTHA

Yis, m'am.

[*Awed.*]

An' do yez own th' whole house entoire?

[*He nods quizzically.*]

Ah, glory be to God fer that!

HUBERT

[*Going to open the second window.*]

I'll tend to the windows on this floor.

[*Looking out, then turning.*]

Oh, catch that ice-man and get him to leave a piece of ice.

MURTHA

Now do you be shtandin' there, son, so he don't get away. Oi'll let him in.

[*She starts to go off through the arch.*]

HUBERT

[*Pointing to the door.*]

No, this way through the basement.

[MURTHA *scrambles off quickly.* HUBERT *pauses, looking out, sees the ice-man, whistles and gesticulates to him to wait and go down into the*

house. During this, SUSAN AMBIE *enters from the hall through the arch.* SUSAN *is a woman of forty-five. She has the soul of a chaperon. She enters in nervous haste.*]

HUBERT

Why, Miss Ambie!

[*Shaking hands.*]

Where's Caroline?

SUSAN

Get your hat and come right down to the dock with me.

HUBERT

I'm never missed unless there's been some trouble. What is it?

SUSAN

Your wife has been grossly insulted, as I was! It's unheard of!

HUBERT

[*Dawning.*]

Ah! trouble with the customs. Is that it?

SUSAN

[*Indignantly.*]

They have dared to suspect us, your wife and me!

HUBERT

You mean they've found you out. You too!

SUSAN

I'm not speaking for myself. When I saw they were going to be disagreeable, I declared everything. But suddenly I realized that a vulgar inspector woman had been watching Caroline. I saw her take Carrie off! All your wife's trunks are held!

HUBERT

[*Grimly relieved.*]

Good!

SUSAN

[*Recoiling with a stare.*]

Carrie's told me many things; but I never believed that you could be so heartless!

HUBERT

I've been prepared for this for many years. If she will do things in her own high-handed way, she'll have to stand the consequences. That's why I never meet her.

SUSAN

Then you refuse to go?

HUBERT

I refuse to be made a cat's-paw. That is, when I can help it.

SUSAN

Oh!

HUBERT

What is there for me to do? You must have made false declarations.

SUSAN

We didn't know they'd be so strict with us. We're not tradespeople or importers, or —

HUBERT

No, you're worse. Two women without even the wretched excuse of poverty, attempting to defraud the government!

SUSAN

Mr. Knollys!

HUBERT

Ha! The cold sweat isn't worth the money.

[*Wipes his brow.*]

SUSAN

I don't know what she'll do!

HUBERT

She'll come home chastened in spirit, I hope, after having profited by this experience.

SUSAN

I really believe you're glad she's in trouble!

HUBERT

Not that. But I shall be glad if this population of a hundred million citizens in their corporate capacity are able, for once in her life, to demonstrate to my good wife that she can't do everything she likes with everybody. I've tried, her friends have tried, society has tried, perhaps the *government* will succeed.

SUSAN

Well, if I can't make you see your duty —

HUBERT

[*Interrupting.*]

The question of my duty to my wife is one that I do not care to discuss even with you.

SUSAN

It's none of my business, I suppose . . .

HUBERT

[*Bluntly.*]

Quite so.

SUSAN

[*Fixes her hat.*]

Then I'll go back alone. Carrie's my dearest friend —

[*Then, in a bravado of accusing tearfulness.*]

And I can't help it if I'm not strong enough to stand by quietly and see her die of mortification!

HUBERT

[*Sarcastically.*]

You might advise her to appeal to them for clemency.

SUSAN

She can't find less of it there than here!

[*He turns and goes up.* SUSAN *is about to exit when* CAROLINE KNOLLYS *enters from the hall.* CAROLINE *is a woman of forty, very young looking, handsome, commanding and self-possessed. She is faultlessly gowned.*]

SUSAN

[*With a cry.*]

Oh, Carrie!

CAROLINE

[*Entering.*]

Oh, there you are, Susan. How are you, Hubert?

[*Shakes hands with him. Then to* SUSAN.]

I didn't know what became of you.

SUSAN

I came right here.

CAROLINE

You should have told me. Ninette and I looked every place.

SUSAN

I didn't want those men to see us together.

CAROLINE

Nonsense!

SUSAN

And I thought —

CAROLINE

[*Interrupting.*]

You didn't think. You went right off your head.

HUBERT

[*Expectantly.*]

Well?

CAROLINE

[*To* HUBERT.]

You seem to thrive in my absence.

[*To* SUSAN.]

Doesn't he?

HUBERT

I return the doubtful compliment. The same to you, and many of them.

CAROLINE

Thank you.

[*To* SUSAN.]

You got through quickly, didn't you?

SUSAN

When I saw they were going to be disagreeable, I declared everything.

CAROLINE

What!

SUSAN

What could I do?

CAROLINE

[*Shrugging her shoulders.*]

I told you exactly what to do.

SUSAN

But when that woman searched me, I —

CAROLINE

You lost your nerve.

SUSAN

Oh, Carrie, I'm not thinking of myself. What did they do to you?

HUBERT

[*Expectantly.*]

Yes, what did they do to you?

CAROLINE

To me? Why, what's the matter?

SUSAN

[*Relieved.*]

Nothing, dear, if you're all right. How brave you are!

CAROLINE

Don't be absurd!

HUBERT

[*Breaking in.*]

I should hardly call it bravery. This was bound to come some time. I've always said so. I've always feared it.

CAROLINE

[*Calmly.*]

Feared what?

HUBERT

Miss Ambie's told me everything!

CAROLINE

[*With a sharp look at* SUSAN.]

Oh, indeed! Then there's nothing for me to say.

[*Rises to cross.*]

HUBERT

[*Nettled.*]

Caroline, I want to know exactly what has happened; so if there's anything that can be done now, I —

CAROLINE

[*Sarcastically.*]

My dear Hubert, I'm really sorry to disappoint you; but there's nothing to be done.

HUBERT

And how about your difficulty with the trunks?

CAROLINE

[*Smiling.*]

Sorry again. There's been no difficulty.

HUBERT

Then why did you send for me?

CAROLINE

I didn't send for you.

HUBERT

You didn't!

[*He looks at* SUSAN *inquiringly.*]

SUSAN

I know, but —

CAROLINE

Whenever we are away from you, Hubert, we grow so accustomed to depend on the chivalry and courtesy of men, that on our return, *Susan* forgets, and has to learn her lesson of self-dependence over again. You must forgive her. Really, Susan, you gave yourself too much concern.

SUSAN

My dear, I was so frightened. Didn't that woman search you?

CAROLINE

Me? Oh, no! I very soon put her in her place. And then, besides, I was careful to have nothing dutiable on my person.

HUBERT

Where *are* your trunks?

CAROLINE

I couldn't carry them with me, all nine of them. They'll be here shortly, I suppose.

[*She stands before the Venetian mirror, takes off her hat and fixes her hair.*]

HUBERT

Caroline, there's been quite enough of this bantering. *Did* you make a declaration?

CAROLINE

Sufficient for all practical purposes.

HUBERT

And what does that mean?

CAROLINE

I've done exactly as I've always done. I refused to argue the matter. I settled. Of course, as the law puts a premium on *dis*honesty, I found it expedient to —

HUBERT

[*Interrupting.*]

To what?

CAROLINE

[*Smiling.*]

To pay the premium.

HUBERT

It isn't only a question of expediency. It's downright lying!

CAROLINE

[*Sarcastically.*]

Behold the moralist!

HUBERT

[*Continuing.*]

And it's a question of decent, honest citizenship!

CAROLINE

But I'm not a citizen; and I don't care to be. If *you* were honest, you'd confess you're only irritated, Hubert, because you can't say: "I told you so." So don't moralize; it doesn't suit you; and don't talk like a husband the first day I arrive. That doesn't suit me.

[HUBERT *is about to say something, but is interrupted by the entrance of* MRS. MURTHA *from the basement.* CAROLINE *looks at her with an amused smile.*]

MURTHA

Mr. Knowllez, the motor-man from the taxi-cab is ashkin' if you'll be wantin' him to wait any longer.

SUSAN

Oh, that's my cab! He's been there all this time!

[*She flounces to the hall.*]

HUBERT

Wait, I'll —

SUSAN

[*With acerbity.*]

No, thank you.

[*Exits.*]

MURTHA

An' th' oice man will be wantin' twinty cints fer th' oice.

[*To* CAROLINE.]

Shure, it's the grand box ye have.

HUBERT

[*Giving her money.*]

Here.

[MURTHA *goes to door.*]

Oh, you can fetch up some glasses now, with ice in them; if you will.

MURTHA

Yis, sor.

[*Exits hastily.*]

CAROLINE

[*Amazed.*]

Where did you get her?

HUBERT

At a place that calls itself the "Co-operative Servant Agency."

CAROLINE

That must be the new name for the "Zoo." Have you a match?

HUBERT

Yes.

CAROLINE

[*Opening her cigarette case.*]

Will you smoke?

HUBERT

Thank you, I prefer my own.

CAROLINE

These are contraband.

HUBERT

The kind you like.

CAROLINE

Yes.

[*He strikes a match for* CAROLINE. *She lights her cigarette.*]

HUBERT

Well, didn't you have a good time abroad?

CAROLINE

Certainly.

[*He sits at left of table, and lights his cigarette. She sits at right.*]

HUBERT

But you changed your plans rather unexpectedly?

CAROLINE

I hope that hasn't inconvenienced you.

HUBERT

Not at all.

[SUSAN *enters from the hall.*]

SUSAN

I hate America!

HUBERT

Eh?

SUSAN

When you sail up the harbor and see the Statue of Liberty, you feel a tremendous emotion of patriotism; but when you see your first cab charge, you want to turn around and go right back to Europe. I told the man there was something the matter with his meter! It jumped ten cents while I was arguing with him!

CAROLINE

Did you pay?

SUSAN

I *had* to!

CAROLINE

Then don't complain. Pay or complain; but don't do both. It isn't economical.

[MURTHA *enters, carrying three glasses awkwardly.*]

MURTHA

Here ye are, Mr. Knowllez!

[CAROLINE *opens the newspaper on the table and begins to read.*]

HUBERT

Thank you, that will do.

MURTHA

[*Putting down the glasses.*]

Shure, they'll do.

[*She suddenly stares as she sees* CAROLINE *smoking.*]

Ah, fer th' love o' God!

[CAROLINE *looks up.* MURTHA *continues:*]

Shure, Oi do be fergittin' mesilf when Oi be passin' rhemarks wid your hushband.

[*Catching* CAROLINE'S *eye.*]

Oh, Lord, yis, m'am.

[*She wilts away and exits to basement.*]

[HUBERT *opens the whisky bottle.*]

HUBERT

Miss Ambie, will you have a Scotch and soda?

SUSAN

No, thank you, it always makes me silly. I'll go directly to my room.

CAROLINE

[*Not looking up from the newspaper.*]

Take the front room on the third floor.

SUSAN

Don't worry about me. I'll have Ninette arrange your things.

CAROLINE

[*Turning over the paper.*]

Thank you, dear.

[SUSAN *exits up stairs.*]

HUBERT

She's going to stay here?

CAROLINE

Yes.

HUBERT

Oh, then, in that case —

[*He ostentatiously doubles his drink.*]

How do you stand her?

CAROLINE

She pays her own way and is very useful.

HUBERT

[*Sarcastically.*]

I daresay; but to me she's simply an interfering nuisance.

[*Pours soda into his whisky.*]

CAROLINE

[*Still reading.*]

No. She's a constitutional altruist. That is, she has the soul of a servant.

HUBERT

A Scotch and soda?

CAROLINE

I never take it in the morning.

HUBERT

[*Drinking.*]

I always forget.

CAROLINE

[*Looking up.*]

The Homestead stock at sixty-four?

HUBERT

It closed at seventy yesterday.

CAROLINE

What made the slump?

HUBERT

A series of muck-raking articles about Factory Reform, and a lot of talk about Child Labor.

CAROLINE

I hope you're not embarrassed.

HUBERT

I've got to keep buying *in* to steady them.

CAROLINE

[*Putting down the paper.*]

I'll lend you, Hubert; but I won't invest.

HUBERT

[*Ironically.*]

Really, Caroline, your generosity overwhelms me.

CAROLINE

Not at all. I know you have collateral.

HUBERT

I still hope to worry along without placing myself under *financial* obligations to you.

CAROLINE

[*Placing both her elbows on table and looking at him narrowly.*]

Hubert, I've often thought you resented my having independent means.

HUBERT

It's foolish of me; but I believe it might have made some difference in our lives, if you'd been —

CAROLINE

[*Interrupting.*]

If I'd been dependent upon you for everything. If I had had no individuality of my own, or the means of keeping it intact. In other words, if I'd been poor. Is that what you mean?

HUBERT

No. But the superfluous wealth you've had has deprived us both of at least *one* of the real things. If we'd been poor together, there might have been something in our lives . . . something we've missed — something at any rate *I've* missed. Some mutuality — some interest together. [*Rising.*] Here we are, two people who have lived for twenty odd years together, and who have never really had even a trouble in common!

CAROLINE

[*With a remote smile.*]

What trouble would you like to have me share with you?

[*Pause.*]

HUBERT

[*With a changed tone.*]

Oh, none.

CAROLINE

[*Laughing.*]

Hubert, don't be romantic toward your wife. That's waste. You're neither old enough nor young enough to play that sketch convincingly. You're neither dawn nor twilight; and Romance needs something undiscovered, something in possibility, something not yet precipitated into noonday commonplace reality. And you and I — we know too much about each other to really carry that off without laughing in our sleeves. You say it isn't money. Oh, then I fear something has gone wrong with some object of your affection.

HUBERT

Please!

CAROLINE

Then what is it?

HUBERT

I — I was about to speak of Elsie and Stephen.

CAROLINE

[*Carelessly.*]

Oh, yes. How are the happy couple?

HUBERT

I'm afraid our daughter's not very happy. Stephen is a fool.

CAROLINE

I can't help that.

HUBERT

Have Elsie down here with us a little while —

CAROLINE

[*Interrupting.*]

Impossible!

HUBERT

She might occupy her old rooms.

CAROLINE

I have other plans.

HUBERT

But a little motherly counsel from you might —

CAROLINE

[*Waving the discussion aside.*]

Oh, Elsie and Stephen bore me to extinction,— both of them. I did my best for her — gave her a coming out, a season in Newport and —

HUBERT

[*Interrupting.*]

Then married her off, made her a settlement and got rid of her. Gad! A girl of nineteen married!

CAROLINE

How old was I?

HUBERT

Well, our married life is nothing to boast of.

CAROLINE

Pardon, my dear Hubert, we've made a brilliant success of marriage. We ought to be grateful to the institution. It has given both of us the fullest liberty — a liberty that I've enjoyed; and you've —

HUBERT

[*Interrupting.*]

Yes, you've always done exactly what you wanted.

CAROLINE

[*Meaningly.*]

And you?

HUBERT

It makes no difference where we begin, we always wind up at the same place; don't we?

CAROLINE

Because you have abused your liberty.

HUBERT

Yes, I admit, it's my fault — if you like, *all* my fault. It's useless to go back over the old ruptures

and recriminations. The prime mistake in both our lives was that we ever married. Well, we did. After about two years of doves, we had several years of cat and dog — and —

CAROLINE

I beg your pardon, in which class of animals do you place me?

HUBERT

We won't quarrel about the phrase. You refused divorce or separation at a time in life when we might have got one without making ourselves ridiculous.

CAROLINE

Divorce is always ridiculous. I made up my mind you'd never get free for anything *I* should do.

HUBERT

Yes, you've always been very careful about that. It isn't morality; but you never cared to relinquish an advantage. You refused divorce for your own reasons; and I agreed with you for Elsie's sake. Then Elsie married — a great relief to you; and we both agreed that the altitude of ideal husband and wife was too high for *me* to breathe in. You never cared about me; yet you were always very anxious that nobody else should. In the real significance of marriage, you have broken all your vows but one. I have kept all my vows,—

CAROLINE

[*Sharply.*]

Eh?

HUBERT

But one.

CAROLINE

Ah!

HUBERT

[*Continuing.*]

That one violation of mine has given you the whip hand over me for these long years.

CAROLINE

Have you broken with that woman?

HUBERT

What woman?

CAROLINE

That Madden woman — Emily Madden.

HUBERT

You know nothing whatever about her.

CAROLINE

Pardon, I have taken the trouble to gather all the intimate details.

HUBERT

Indeed?

CAROLINE

And my friends have seen you every place with her. That's all I really care about.

HUBERT

And they will continue to see us; whenever Miss Madden does me the honor to accompany me.

CAROLINE

[*Resuming her newspaper.*]

Oh, very well. I shall continue to condone everything; because I do not wish the elaborate structure I have built for many years to be destroyed. Our marriage stands as a temple to the Gods of Convention. The priests are hypocrites; but be careful not to make the *congregation* laugh. That's all I ask of you. Quite simple, isn't it?

HUBERT

Yes, simple as all heartless things are.

[*Pause. She reads.* HUBERT *walks up as* SUSAN AMBIE *enters from up stairs.*]

SUSAN

Carrie, I tried to 'phone the Intelligence Offices; but your 'phone isn't connected.

[*She looks accusingly at* HUBERT.]

HUBERT

[*Irritated.*]

Excuse me.

[*Goes to door, then turns.*]

Oh, Miss Ambie, there's a prize of fifty dollars for the first *good* news that you announce.

[*Exits.*]

SUSAN

[*Sentimentally.*]

I can see by your face, dear, you've had a scene.

CAROLINE

No. Just our annual understanding.

SUSAN

[*Curiously.*]

You don't have to tell me, Carrie.

[*Pause.*]

Has he broken with that Madden woman?

CAROLINE

[*Smiling.*]

I hope not.

SUSAN

It's wonderful that all this hasn't made you bitter.

CAROLINE

Bitter?

[*Laughing.*]

I am very grateful to Miss Madden.

SUSAN

[*Quickly.*]

Oh, Carrie, you didn't tell *him* that, did you?

CAROLINE

[*Laughs.*]

Oh, dear no! I never let him forget that at any moment I could name Miss Madden as a co-respondent. She is a weapon in my hands.

SUSAN

[*Admiringly.*]

What a wonderful person you are! Only —

CAROLINE

Only what?

SUSAN

Only be careful, dear. Don't give *him* a weapon against *you.*

CAROLINE

In what way?

SUSAN

Of course you'd never think about it; and it's quite as well you shouldn't, as long as I can do that for

you. But be careful, dear, about Lawrence Sanbury.

CAROLINE

Don't be absurd. You were practically always with me.

SUSAN

[*With a nervous whimper.*]

Oh, no, I failed you, Carrie; I should have dragged along no matter how ill I was.

CAROLINE

[*Bluntly.*]

Get that idea out of your head.

SUSAN

But if he should ever learn about your last days alone with Lawrence in the mountains . . .

CAROLINE

He'll never learn it.

SUSAN

And there is a *Mrs.* Sanbury, too!

CAROLINE

[*Impatiently.*]

Of course! Susan, I've known artists all my life, and I've never had to bother with their wives; at least . . .

[MURTHA *enters excitedly from the hall.*]

CAROLINE

Would you mind knocking on the door before you enter a room?

MURTHA

[*Pointing innocently to the arch.*]

But there isn't any door, me dear.

CAROLINE

What is it?

MURTHA

Me great friend and sishter, Mrs. Sanbury, is here wid her hushband! They be a wantin' to see you!

SUSAN

[*Frightened.*]

She's here!

CAROLINE

Tell them I'm at home.

MURTHA

[*Going to the arch.*]

Why wouldn't you be? Shure, Oi told thim that already.

SUSAN

[*Anxiously.*]

Oh, Carrie! She's here!

CAROLINE

[*Severely.*]

Don't be an ass!

MURTHA

[*Calling out into the hall.*]

Come, Lord bless yer lovin' hearts! It's roight in here, yer to come!

[*Re-entering.*]

Shure Oi'd trust her wid a million dollars. It was Mrs. Sanbury, it was, that sint me to you.

CAROLINE

Oh, I've *her* to thank for *you*, have I?

MURTHA

Yis, m'am. Shure ye have.

[LAWRENCE *and* HILDEGARDE SANBURY *enter from the hall. He is a handsome vital looking man of twenty-five. He has a quick and ingenuous, volatile manner.* HILDEGARDE, *his wife, is a woman of thirty, of sympathetic and responsive nature, full of exuberant gratitude to* CAROLINE, *whom she has never met. In dress* HILDEGARDE *is the exact opposite of* CAROLINE. *She is scrupulously neat, but* CAROLINE *is a perfect conscience of every allure of fashion. They enter followed by* MURTHA, *who goes up rear.* LAWRENCE *nods to* SUSAN.]

CAROLINE

[*To* HILDEGARDE.]

I'm very glad you've come.

LAWRENCE

Hildegarde, this is Mrs. Knollys.

[HUBERT *enters quietly from the door leading to the basement. He is unnoticed amid the greetings. He goes nonchalantly towards window at left.*]

HILDEGARDE

When I heard Larrie was coming to you, I just couldn't stay at home.

LAWRENCE

She wouldn't. So we —

HILDEGARDE

[*Interrupting.*]

Oh, Larrie, you must let *me* speak! You've had Mrs. Knollys all to yourself for six long weeks —

[HUBERT *turns as* LAWRENCE *goes to* SUSAN.]

You see I've heard so much about you. Larrie wrote me reams and reams of letters right from the beginning.

CAROLINE

[*Purringly.*]

Yes.

HILDEGARDE

Oh, yes! I've followed you every step you've taken.

[SUSAN *looks anxious and laughs a little hysterically.*]

CAROLINE

[*Noticing* HUBERT'S *presence.*]

Indeed!

HILDEGARDE

[*Seeing* CAROLINE'S *face change.*]

I hope we haven't intruded!

CAROLINE

Not at all. Oh, Hubert, let me present you to Mr. and Mrs. Sanbury.

HUBERT

Ah! How do you do?

[*They exchange greetings.*]

CAROLINE

I've persuaded Mr. Sanbury to accept the commission to remodel the house.

HUBERT

[*Surprised.*]

Oh, have you!

[*Pause.*]

HILDEGARDE

[*Continuing to* CAROLINE.]

Oh, it was wonderful for Larrie to be with you. You were eyes to him in Italy.

CAROLINE

Let me present you to Miss Ambie.

[*Pointedly.*]

She was with us too.

[HUBERT *notes this closely, though seeming not to listen.*]

HILDEGARDE

[*Surprised.*]

Oh, *were* you?

[*Goes immediately to* SUSAN.]

Larrie wrote me you were taken ill in Switzerland, and that he and Mrs. Knollys went on alone.

SUSAN

[*Nervously.*]

Oh, dear no, I mean . . . I . . . It was really nothing serious.

HILDEGARDE

I hope you've recovered.

SUSAN

Oh, perfectly, thank you. I didn't miss much of the trip . . . You see it was really only . . .

CAROLINE

[*Seeing* HUBERT'S *eye on them.*]

Oh, Susan, it's nearly twelve.

[*To the others.*]

Excuse me. [*Again to* SUSAN] You might hail a taxi and settle the matter of servants for me.

SUSAN

[*Anxiously.*]

Yes, yes, but hadn't I better —?

CAROLINE

[*Decisively, going to the hall with* SUSAN.]

The club for luncheon. One o'clock.

[SUSAN *exits.*]

MURTHA

[*Coming up from rear.*]

Ah, it do be good to see thim together again, eh?

CAROLINE

Did you want to ask me anything?

MURTHA

If it's a chambermaid ye want, me daughter Agnes —

CAROLINE

Would you mind closing the door?

MURTHA

Ah, not at all.

[*She crosses and closes the door, then returns.*]

CAROLINE

[*Cuttingly.*]

I mean *behind* you.

MURTHA

[*Catching* CAROLINE'S *eye and meaning.*]

Oh, yis, m'am.

[*She exits.*]

CAROLINE

[*Motioning* HILDEGARDE *to a chair.*]

Do I understand you run an Intelligence Office?

HILDEGARDE

I've organized a general employment bureau in connection with the tenements.

LAWRENCE

But, my dear, it's hardly fair to Mrs. Knollys to send this old —

HILDEGARDE

[*Interrupting.*]

We sent her daughter Agnes. You understand, only the derelicts come to us; but you'll see, Mrs. Murtha will do her work well.

CAROLINE

Tell me, do you really *live* among these people?

HILDEGARDE

Yes, at the model tenement. Have you ever seen one?

CAROLINE

No!

HILDEGARDE

I'd be delighted to show you around.

CAROLINE

Yes. Miss Ambie and I will come sometime together.

HILDEGARDE

Do, and take luncheon with us at our co-operative dining-room.

LAWRENCE

[*To* CAROLINE.]

I wouldn't expect too much. You see, it's a fad of hers — Democracy and the Underdog.

HILDEGARDE

Oh, no, that's my real work.

HUBERT

[*Coming into the conversation.*]

What?

HILDEGARDE

We believe in giving the poor people better living conditions first; so that then they will be better able to fight for other things.

HUBERT

Yes, and make them discontented all along the line.

HILDEGARDE

[*Fervently.*]

If only we could make them sufficiently discontented!

HUBERT

[*Taking up the newspaper.*]

I should say you were succeeding very well. Have you seen this series of furious articles on Factory Reform?

HILDEGARDE

[*Looking at paper.*]

Yes.

HUBERT

What do you think of them?

HILDEGARDE

I ought to approve of them.

HUBERT

Why?

HILDEGARDE

Because I wrote them.

HUBERT

[*Amazed.*]

What! You?

HILDEGARDE

Yes. They're mine.

HUBERT

You label these articles reform, but they read pretty much like anarchy to me.

HILDEGARDE

Do you know about our present factory conditions?

HUBERT

[*Grimly.*]

Somewhat, to my cost. You've made me one of your horrible examples.

HILDEGARDE

What!!

HUBERT

I own the majority stock in the Homestead Mills.

LAWRENCE

[*Nervously.*]

Good Lord, Hildegarde! Your crowd haven't been attacking Mr. Knollys, have they?

HILDEGARDE

[*To* LAWRENCE.]

No one was mentioned by name.

[*To* HUBERT.]

Your manager refused to show his stock sheet to our committee; so we simply wrote up the mill.

HUBERT

Our manager has to compete with others. We give these people work. We don't force our hands to come to us.

HILDEGARDE

That's it. The whole system is wrong. The state must remedy it. Individuals can't. You've got to resort to the means of your lowest and most unscrupulous competitor; or leave the field.

HUBERT

Do you mind answering a few questions?

HILDEGARDE

Not at all.

HUBERT

[*To* CAROLINE *and* LAWRENCE.]

Excuse us.

[*He and* HILDEGARDE *go toward the hall. He takes some clippings from his pocket.*]

In the first place you stated . . .

[*They exit and pass out of sight, going toward the right, in earnest conversation.* CAROLINE *is sitting in the large divan chair at the left.* LAWRENCE *comes toward her.*]

LAWRENCE

[*Enthusiastically.*]

Isn't she splendid!

CAROLINE

[*Softly ironical.*]

You treat us all alike; don't you?

LAWRENCE

How?

CAROLINE

[*Quietly.*]

She, too, is older than you. Isn't she?

LAWRENCE

Oh, a year or two. That doesn't matter.

CAROLINE

How chivalrous you are. But for your sake, she ought to be wiser.

LAWRENCE

What do you mean?

CAROLINE

Her radical theories about Democracy and — the great Unwashed. . . . Do you agree with them?

LAWRENCE

I'm an artist. I take no side whatever.

CAROLINE

But don't you see, you'll *have* to take a side?

LAWRENCE

Why?

CAROLINE

People of our class won't support you, if your wife attacks the very sources from which they pay you.

LAWRENCE

[*With sudden anxiety.*]

Oh, perhaps Mr. Knollys will resent what Hildegarde has done, and won't care to give me the work. Is that what you mean?

CAROLINE

I mean your wife mustn't add to my difficulties.

LAWRENCE

[*Sincerely distressed.*]

Oh, Lord! In wrong the first crack out of the box; and I wanted you so much to like each other!

CAROLINE

Tell me,— is she really as frank as she seems?

LAWRENCE

Why, yes. What makes you ask that?

CAROLINE

I was a little startled when I learned you'd written her so definitely about our tour in Italy.

LAWRENCE

[*Relieved.*]

Oh, that's all right. Hildegarde thinks nothing about that.

CAROLINE

But she mustn't give everybody credit for so much sympathetic understanding.

[*With a glance toward the hall.*]

LAWRENCE

You mean your husband!

CAROLINE

[*Quickly.*]

Don't speak so loudly!

[*With a change to a seductive, problematical manner.*]

I haven't told you everything about my life. I thought you guessed.

LAWRENCE

Why, surely, he wouldn't dare to misjudge you, would he?

CAROLINE

We move in a society that does not trust itself, so it is always suspicious.

LAWRENCE

I hope you'll forgive me. I'm just a fool about these things.

CAROLINE

[*Seeing* HUBERT *and* HILDEGARDE *approaching.*]

Pst! Say nothing more.

HUBERT

[*Re-entering from the ha*[illegible]

[*To* HILDEGARDE.]

If I'm on top, I know I'll treat the laborer as well as I can afford. If he's on top, I can't expect so much in return. They get a living wage.

HILDEGARDE

You'd better take a trip down South and see how well they live.

HUBERT

Perhaps I shall. And then I'll want to see you again.

HILDEGARDE

Do!

[*To the others.*]

Until then we part, good, class-conscious, cordial enemies.

HUBERT

[*Pointing to the newspaper.*]

Very well. And how about these articles?

HILDEGARDE

To-morrow we begin on your competitors.

HUBERT

Good! That's fair play.

CAROLINE

Hubert, would you mind showing Mr. Sanbury about the house?

HUBERT

Now?

CAROLINE

Yes. Mrs. Sanbury will remain with me.

[HILDEGARDE *nods.*]

HUBERT

We'll go this way.

LAWRENCE

Excuse me.

[LAWRENCE *and* HUBERT *exit through hall and are seen mounting the stairs.*]

CAROLINE

[*Points to a chair in the full light.*]

You don't mind the light?

HILDEGARDE

Oh, not at all.

CAROLINE

[*Speaking as she pulls up the shade full upon* HILDEGARDE.]

I'm sure we shall understand each other thoroughly; because we both want your husband to succeed.

HILDEGARDE

It's fine of you to be so interested. He's never had a chance to prove what he can do.

CAROLINE

[*Sitting with her back to the light.*]

My interest will excuse many personal questions.

[*Charmingly.*]

He being so young, we can discuss him and his future from the same point of view.

HILDEGARDE

Yes, Larrie for all his twenty-five years is just a great big boy.

CAROLINE

How did you come to live there in the tenements?

HILDEGARDE

Surely Larrie has told you!

CAROLINE

But I never trust a husband to tell me all about his home.

[*Insinuatingly.*]

If the wife loves him very much, he never really knows his circumstances.

HILDEGARDE

We've had no secrets from each other. We struggled on together right from the beginning. I sometimes got disheartened, but Larrie never did.

CAROLINE

Ah! Did *he* decide to live there?

HILDEGARDE

No. I lived there first, and when we married, we decided to settle there together, so I might continue my work.

CAROLINE

But do you think the tenement is quite the — ah — the atmosphere for him to work in?

HILDEGARDE

He hasn't complained; and offices cost lots of money.

CAROLINE

Yes.

HILDEGARDE

Your commission will enable him to start in business for himself; and then we hope to afford a better place.

CAROLINE

Yes. But have you ever considered how your very work in the world might hinder him?

HILDEGARDE

[*Puzzled.*]

In what way?

CAROLINE

Art has always been the luxury of a leisure class. It has always been supported by the patronage of wealth; and you can't expect that the people whom you attack, and *publicly* attack, are going to reply by using their influence to promote your husband.

HILDEGARDE

Then Lawrence must work his way without their influence.

CAROLINE

[*With narrowing eyes.*]

In the school of adversity, eh?

HILDEGARDE

[*Proudly.*]

That school has brought out the best in many artists!

CAROLINE

And has killed thousands of others that we never hear of. My dear, the school of adversity is a very good school; provided you don't matriculate too early and continue too long.

HILDEGARDE

I'd rather continue just as we are now to the end of our days, than have him sell his soul and abandon all he's stood for.

CAROLINE

You would; but how about *him?*

HILDEGARDE

He would too!

CAROLINE

Perhaps I know him better than you do.

HILDEGARDE

I don't think so.

CAROLINE

Then some day, you may have to reproach yourself for his failure.

HILDEGARDE

I?

CAROLINE

Yes.

HILDEGARDE

Why should he fail?

CAROLINE

Just because of his unusual qualities. The world at best is a cruel place. It gives its prizes to the ordinary. It martyrizes the exceptional person, because it doesn't understand him, and what it doesn't understand, it fears; and what it fears, it destroys, or worse than that, it allows to die unnoticed. The world will make your husband suffer, *just because he is exceptional.*

HILDEGARDE

I can't believe that!

CAROLINE

[*Sarcastically.*]

One must indeed be an optimist to be a fanatic. With your help I hoped to place him where I know he belongs. But I cannot; if you oppose it.

[*Pause.*]

HILDEGARDE

I don't see how *I* stand in his way!

CAROLINE

You have already made a difficulty with my husband.

HILDEGARDE

How?

CAROLINE

My dear, you can hardly expect my husband to give your husband an expensive commission; when you spend your time writing articles that lower the value of the most important investment he holds.

HILDEGARDE

Then Lawrence will have to choose.

CAROLINE

Oh, no. You mustn't put that on him. You mustn't bind him by his love for you. For if he fails to choose properly, you will be forced to bear the burden of his bitterness. And there's nothing so bitter in the world as an artist's bitterness.

[*Looking at her closely.*]

It won't come now. I grant you a few years more of his hopeful illusions and youthful courage; but then your awakening will come . . . when you are gray — at heart, and he still in his prime; but with the sources of his faith run dry — eaten with disappointments, sick with postponements, his inspiration festered by discouragement; while he still knocks listlessly at the doors, which would be open to him now; but will be closed hereafter, when his opportunities have passed him by.

HILDEGARDE

That can't be true!

CAROLINE

[*Continuing ruthlessly.*]

And in the cruel retrospect, then *his* awakening will come; and he will see that it has been [*Cynically*] what you call your "life-work" that has hindered him. And then, what will his love for you be worth to *you* or *him?*

HILDEGARDE

[*Obstinately.*]

He has his work, I have mine. It's for him to choose.

CAROLINE

And is your muck-raking worth his career? Knowing that he loves you now, and will be influenced by you, have you a right to make him choose?

HILDEGARDE

No more than you!

CAROLINE

There is this difference: — *I* do it for his sake purely.

HILDEGARDE

So do I!

CAROLINE

I doubt it.

HILDEGARDE

[*Passionately.*]

Don't you think it would be easier for me to see him settled? I've walked the floor at night! I've agonized over his career, while he's been sleeping like a child!

CAROLINE

[*Quickly.*]

Ah, then there *have* been secrets!

HILDEGARDE

[*Continuing.*]

Yes! I've made it a point of honor not to allow him to spend one cent on me!

[*Suddenly.*]

You're looking at this dress! I know it's shabby — You've noticed it — He hasn't . . .

CAROLINE

My dear, you mustn't feel sensitive about your clothes!

HILDEGARDE

[*Choking back her tears.*]

It's the first time that I ever was!

CAROLINE

You must let me give you a gown or two.

HILDEGARDE

[*Recoiling.*]

Oh, no! I couldn't accept them — I couldn't!

CAROLINE

But, my dear —

HILDEGARDE

[*Proudly.*]

Excuse me, don't presume!

CAROLINE

I hoped you'd understand. Your husband's profession has a social side. There are people he must meet — people that will be of use to him. I want to arrange it. You won't object?

HILDEGARDE

Oh, no!

CAROLINE

It's always easy for a man — a dress suit and there you are. But we women are at a disadvantage without the proper equipment, and . . .

HILDEGARDE

Please leave me out of all your calculations. I shan't complicate matters.

CAROLINE

My dear, I merely intended to save you from embarrassment.

HILDEGARDE

I am very grateful. But I repeat, it's impossible I should accept anything from you. We belong to two totally different orders.

CAROLINE

Then as you're unwilling to meet the social requirements, you will understand perfectly, if you're not included in . . .

HILDEGARDE

Certainly. I shall not expect to be invited.

CAROLINE

I must compliment you, Mrs. Sanbury. You're stronger than I thought you were.

[*Pause. The two women look at each other.* HILDEGARDE *is dazed.* CAROLINE *is smilingly confident.*]

LAWRENCE

[*Coming down stairs.*]

We'll have a jolly job introducing Queen Victoria to the Renaissance. You've plenty of room; that is, if you'll let me smash the conventional partitions.

CAROLINE

[*Meaningly.*]

I always like to smash conventional partitions; provided the outside walls remain intact. Have you explained to Hubert?

LAWRENCE

He couldn't follow the sketch.

CAROLINE

[*With a veiled sneer.*]

You'll have to build models before he can see.

LAWRENCE

[*After a slight hesitation.*]

Will you really need models?

CAROLINE

I am afraid so. How long would it take you?

LAWRENCE

Well, you know, I've left my old firm; and I'll first have to look about for larger quarters.

HILDEGARDE

[*Involuntarily.*]

Oh!

LAWRENCE

[*Confidently.*]

I've been thinking of changing. It's only been a question of the proper place.

CAROLINE

[*Knowingly smiling at* HILDEGARDE.]

Oh, of course. But I've an idea. In insisting upon models, I appreciate I am asking the unusual; but I want to expedite matters.

LAWRENCE

Yes . . . Yes . . .

CAROLINE

You've seen the fourth storey?

LAWRENCE

Yes

CAROLINE

Couldn't you build your models there?

LAWRENCE

[*Eagerly.*]

Splendidly!

[*Relieved.*]

That would solve everything; wouldn't it, Hildegarde?

[*To* CAROLINE.]

And I could consult with you at every step.

CAROLINE

Yes.

[*To* HILDEGARDE.]

And in that way, we needn't interfere with your plans at the tenement.

HILDEGARDE

Oh!

CAROLINE

Perhaps you'd better advise with your wife before you decide. I'll speak with Hubert. Excuse me.

[*She exits through the hall.*]

LAWRENCE

[*Watches her out of the tail of his eye. As soon as she is off, his manner changes, and he comes to* HILDEGARDE *in hushed excitement. He takes her hands and speaks quickly.*]

I'm glad, old girl, you didn't butt into any of my bluffs! I got a cold sweat when she spoke about models!

[*Wiping his brow.*]

Phew! That was a poser! But did you see me do it?

[*Imitating his former manner.*]

"Just looking for a proper place."

[*With a flourish of his hand.*]

Money no object. Did you see me? With not enough to the good to keep the sheriff off any place for a single month!

[*Sitting.*]

That fourth storey is too good to be true!

[*Devoutly.*]

God bless the ugliness of Queen Victoria! God bless the rich with big houses and small families! Don't wake me!

HILDEGARDE

Then you're going to accept her top floor?

LAWRENCE

[*Flabbergasted to an echo.*]

Am I going to accept her . . .? Watch me! I've never told you; but I haven't been able to work there in the tenements. This address alone will get me credit for materials. And right now, I'm in no position to deny her anything.

HILDEGARDE

Evidently.

LAWRENCE

[*Rubbing his chin.*]

Gosh! The old man was pretty mum about the plan.

[*Suddenly.*]

He may be sore about those articles of yours! I hope they haven't queered it.

HILDEGARDE

Oh, I fancy she'll arrange it.

LAWRENCE

I hope she will.

[*Suddenly.*]

Golly, you don't seem to realize what this job means to me!

HILDEGARDE

Perhaps I do, even more than you.

LAWRENCE

[*Intensely.*]

Money! That's what it means . . . Money! A thing we've never had, and a thing we've got to get!

HILDEGARDE

Is money everything?

LAWRENCE

Yes, now — everything. . . . Money! I want money — money to be free to do things — money to get things for you. Do you think I like to see you wearing rags like this?

[*Pointing to her dress.*]

HILDEGARDE

[*With a quick pain.*]

Oh, as for me —

LAWRENCE

I've had enough of the tenements! I've never told you —

HILDEGARDE

Larrie!!

LAWRENCE

[*Excitedly.*]

That's all right, my dear. You're a fanatic about some things. I don't interfere with you, and you mustn't interfere with me!

[*Change.*]

Perhaps you'd better go. . . . I mean if you're not in sympathy with the scheme, for God's sake, don't hang on.

HILDEGARDE

[*Slowly.*]

There's lots that I could say, Larrie. . . .

LAWRENCE

Yes, I know, but not here. Listen — Open your head! I've got to nail this job. I want to do it on my own hook. Then if I take it to a firm, I collar some of the swag and get some credit for my work. . . . I may never wing a chance to start like this again.

[*She is about to say something but he continues.*]

We're broke — and no instalment until the plans and models are accepted. Here I get a place rent free, materials on tick, with Lawrence Sanbury I-N-C upon the signs. . . . I'll incorporate my debts. Otherwise, back again into an old thirty a week job to sweat for the other fellow all my life.

[*Quickly giving* HILDEGARDE *her coat.*]

Hildegarde, here — take your rags and run.

HILDEGARDE

[*Quietly.*]

Shall I wait luncheon?

LAWRENCE

Hang luncheon. I'm going to eat this job.

HILDEGARDE

But on your first day home, after . .

LAWRENCE

There'll be lots of days like this coming.

[*Holding her coat.*]

Here — here she comes. Just say good-by.

[*Enter* CAROLINE *from the hall.*]

CAROLINE

Well, I've spoken with my husband.

LAWRENCE

[*Restrained.*]

Yes . . .?

CAROLINE

He thinks it an admirable plan for you to work here.

LAWRENCE

[*Relieved.*]

Ah, then that's settled!

CAROLINE

So we can begin immediately . . . that is . . . if —

[*Looks at* HILDEGARDE.]

HILDEGARDE

I was just going.

[CAROLINE *is silent.*]

Good-by, Mrs. Knollys.

CAROLINE

[*With feigned surprise.*]

Oh!

[*Then in a commonplace tone.*]

Good-by. I shan't forget your invitation to the tenements.

LAWRENCE

Excuse me, Hildegarde, I'll be home — ah — shortly.

[HILDEGARDE *goes quickly to the arch, and exits through the hall.*]

[LAWRENCE *makes a move to follow her, then pauses perplexed.* CAROLINE *watches him narrowly.*]

LAWRENCE

[*Scratching his head.*]

By Jove! What makes a fellow a brute sometimes to the woman he cares for?

CAROLINE

[*Slowly.*]

It's the artist in *you*, Lawrence, that is instinctively unscrupulous toward anything that hinders its development.

LAWRENCE

But Hildegarde wouldn't hinder me!

CAROLINE

Not intentionally, certainly not. She's an exceptional person.

[*Sitting.*]

I'm sorry she doesn't like me.

LAWRENCE

[*Fighting against his own conviction.*]

What makes you think she doesn't like you?

CAROLINE

She has her — ah — principles. Unfortunately they oppose everything I stand for.

LAWRENCE

You don't know her, she . . .

CAROLINE

Perhaps not, and I'm so sorry; for I hoped we should agree about you.

LAWRENCE

But she must see how much you mean to me, and —

CAROLINE

Perhaps you've been too frank with her.

LAWRENCE

I never conceal anything from Hildegarde.

CAROLINE

[*Ironically.*]

No. . . .

LAWRENCE

[*Continuing.*]

And I'd hate any person that made me lie!

[*Sitting disconsolately.*]

What can I do?

CAROLINE

That you must decide yourself. You stand at a crossing, Lawrence. The one road means the old limitations and the commonplace: the other leads to freedom and opportunity. It's difficult to choose, because she loves you . . . dearly.

LAWRENCE

Of course she does!

CAROLINE

Therefore it's quite natural she should resent any one having the power to do for you what she would like to do; but can't. I'd feel that way myself, if . . .

LAWRENCE

If what?

CAROLINE

If I loved you the way she does. If I weren't ambitious for your *great* work!

LAWRENCE

But she wants me to do big work.

CAROLINE

[*Shaking her head.*]

You feel things in you that she never dreamed of. That's why . . .

[*With a change.*]

But I oughtn't make you conscious.

LAWRENCE

What is it?

CAROLINE

[*With a show of reluctance.*]

That's why you aren't at your best, when you're with her. Now there, I've said it.

LAWRENCE

But I haven't had the chance of really explaining to her all I want to do, and . . .

CAROLINE

[*Unscrupulously.*]

An *artist* justifies himself by *doing:* not explaining! Consider everything that helps you to your end as good. That is the conscience of an artist. His work is always greater than his life.

LAWRENCE

By Jove, I always see clearer when I talk to you!

CAROLINE

[*Passionately.*]

I am unscrupulous for the best in you!

LAWRENCE

[*Taking her hands.*]

You're wonderful!

CAROLINE

I mustn't be mistaken in you!

LAWRENCE

[*Kissing her hands.*]

You won't be.

CAROLINE

I have a problem too, because of you.

LAWRENCE

[*Dropping her hands.*]

Yes, I know.

CAROLINE

And you must justify *me* as well. We made a compact. Have you forgotten it?

LAWRENCE

The afternoon we left Florence.

CAROLINE

And climbed the hills toward Fiesolé . . . alone.

LAWRENCE

[*Rapt.*]

In the flaming orange scarfs of mist, with the whole world behind us in the valley.

CAROLINE

Where you said the world should always be for the artist with the vision and the will to create a new form of art. You were splendid then!

LAWRENCE

And afterward, the long ride on to Brescia and Como and —

CAROLINE

Psch! That lies behind us.

[*Pause. With a change.*]

I thought that memory belonged to us alone.

LAWRENCE

It does!

CAROLINE

[*Raising her finger.*]

You shared it.

LAWRENCE

Forget that, please.

CAROLINE

I hope the others will.

MURTHA'S VOICE

[*Up stairs.*]

Will I hang the things up here, sir?

HUBERT'S VOICE

[*Up stairs.*]

Yes, just put them in the closet, please.

CAROLINE

[*Quickly to* LAWRENCE.]

Sit down.

[*He starts to sit in a chair near her. She points to one at right of stage.*]

No; over there.

[*He goes quickly to the other side. She continues.*]

We'll lunch together. The Colony Club at one o'clock.

LAWRENCE

I thought that Hildegarde might —

CAROLINE

[*Interrupting peremptorily.*]

I *must* see you.

LAWRENCE

But on my first day home —

CAROLINE

[*Impatiently.*]

Between Susan's nervousness and your thoughtlessness, I . . .

LAWRENCE

Very well.

[*Enter* HUBERT *from the hall.*]

HUBERT

H'm! Still talking over plans?

LAWRENCE

[*Rising, embarrassed.*]

Yes . . . yes . . . and I want to thank you, Mr. Knollys.

HUBERT

Me? For what?

LAWRENCE

The fourth storey. It'll be a great help to me.

[HUBERT *looks perplexed.*]

CAROLINE

You know, I have asked Mr. Sanbury to build his models there.

HUBERT

[*Grimly.*]

Ah . . . *have* you! I didn't know.

LAWRENCE

[*Filling in the awkward pause.*]

Then you can see exactly how the rooms will look.

HUBERT

Oh, as for me . . . [*Smiles.*] Quite so. Very kind of you — very. Where's your wife?

LAWRENCE

She's already gone.

HUBERT

[*Sarcastically.*]

If you should *see* her again, you might tell her that I've decided to go South immediately.

LAWRENCE

[*Jerking at his watch.*]

Yes — ah . . . She'll be delighted to hear that . . . and . . . ah . . . I was delighted to meet you, Mr. Knollys; and if you'll excuse me — I'll — I'll . . . be going now.

[*He stands awkwardly.* HUBERT *goes to the hall, then turns to* LAWRENCE.]

HUBERT

Good morning.

LAWRENCE

Oh, good-by, Mrs. Knollys.

[*To* HUBERT.]

Good-by, Mr. Knollys.

CAROLINE

Good-by.

[HUBERT *nods.* LAWRENCE *exits. Pause.*]

HUBERT

[*Laughing softly.*]

Caroline, I think your latest is a light-weight!

CAROLINE

[*Changing the subject.*]

You're going South?

HUBERT

I hope you'll endure my absence.

[*Pause.*]

What was your object in giving your young man the impression that you had to consult me in anything?

CAROLINE

I generally consult you.

HUBERT

Yes. After you've completed your arrangements. It's your house. I've nothing to say. But I see now why you needed Elsie's room.

[*A furious knock is heard in the hall. They both start as* MURTHA *enters.*]

MURTHA

[*Proudly.*]

Ah, did ye hear me knock?

CAROLINE

What is it?

MURTHA

A young lady's in th' front hall.

[*To* HUBERT.]

She wants to see you, Mr. Knowllez.

HUBERT

To see me?

MURTHA

[*Hesitating.*]

She says she's from th' Cushtoms office, so she says.

HUBERT

[*Grimly to* CAROLINE.]

I fancy it's about your trunks.

CAROLINE

[*To* MURTHA.]

Send her in here.

MURTHA

Shure Oi will — whoy wouldn't Oi?

[*Exits to hall.*]

HUBERT

Why should the young lady want to see me?

CAROLINE

Have you money with you?

HUBERT

[*Taking out his bill case.*]

Yes.

CAROLINE

[*With a smile.*]

I gave her my card.

HUBERT

But —

CAROLINE

[*Taking his bill case and going to window.*]

Let me see. All she's come for is more money.

[HUBERT *during the above goes toward the hall.* CAROLINE'S *back is to him.* EMILY MADDEN *enters nervously from the right. She is a young woman of about twenty-eight.* HUBERT *makes a quick recoil of amazement and a half-smothered exclamation:* "Emily!" *She, seeing* CAROLINE, *gives him a quick gesture of silence.*]

EMILY

[*In a breathless staccato and a forbidding manner.*]

This is Mr. Knollys, I believe.

HUBERT

Yes.

CAROLINE

[*Turning and coming down.*]

I hope you've had no difficulty.

EMILY

You evidently did not understand.

CAROLINE

Oh, I see. In that case, why, of course, I wish to pay you for any further —

EMILY

[*Violently.*]

Please!

HUBERT

Caroline!

CAROLINE

Oh!

EMILY

Mrs. Knollys, all your trunks are held.

CAROLINE

[*Savagely.*]

The insolence!

EMILY

It was the only way to save you from a charge of smuggling and . . .

CAROLINE

Indeed!

EMILY

I couldn't make you realize it. That's why I've come to see your husband.

CAROLINE

[*With a smile.*]

Thank you very much.

HUBERT

Caroline, you'd better let me settle this.

CAROLINE

[*Crossing to the hall.*]

By all means. You always settle things so adequately.

[*To* EMILY.]

Good morning.

[*She starts to go up stairs, then turns and says significantly to* HUBERT:]

Oh, your purse!

[*She throws it gracefully over the balustrade. He, standing below, catches it. She continues up*

stairs. He watches her out of sight, then turns and comes down to EMILY.]

HUBERT

[*Giving way to his astonishment.*]

Emily! I'm all in the dark! How are you mixed up in this?

EMILY

[*Quickly.*]

I left the newspaper and got a position in the Customs. This morning I saw her name on the list of passengers. She fell into the hands of one of the sourest old inspectors. He found some jewels in a sachet bag. Then he caught her in a lie. As usual, he asked her to reconsider her declaration. She refused . . .

HUBERT

[*Unconsciously.*]

The damned fool!

EMILY

Then he insisted she be searched.

HUBERT

Naturally.

EMILY

As I was standing there, the officers deputed me to look her over.

HUBERT

[*Appalled.*]

But she didn't know who you were, did she?

EMILY

Oh, no, but I took the chance to tell her of the penalty: ten thousand dollars' fine, or two years' imprisonment, or both.

HUBERT

I hope that sobered her!

EMILY

Judge for yourself. She said she had a list, and gave me this envelope.

[*Giving him an envelope out of her bag.*]

Open it.

HUBERT

[*Opening it.*]

Two one hundred dollar bills.

EMILY

One for my partner. There were two of us.

HUBERT

[*Putting envelope on table.*]

The same old game.

EMILY

I felt like throwing it into her face; but then I thought of you, and held my temper. The inspectors were waiting.

HUBERT

What did you do?

EMILY

I told your wife I'd tend to everything, and got her off. Then I reported for her that she had reconsidered, had nothing on her person, she was ill and didn't know what things were dutiable; and therefore wanted all her stuff to be appraised.

HUBERT

Good! And then?

EMILY

Then I tried to 'phone you everywhere, and finally I had to take the chance of even meeting — her again, and come right here to tell you.

HUBERT

You little thoroughbred.

EMILY

Hubert, do nothing until you hear from them. Dispute nothing, but make her stick to the story that I framed up for her, and pay on their appraisal. I hope I've done right.

HUBERT

Right! I don't know how to thank you.

EMILY

Return this to your wife with my compliments.

[*Points to envelope.*]

HUBERT

I guess you're all in, Emily.

EMILY

Oh, don't mind about me.

HUBERT

Filthy business, this.

[*Suddenly anxious.*]

There'll be no consequences for you?

EMILY

I guess not.

HUBERT

[*Walking about.*]

I don't know how it is. She never learns. She does exactly what she pleases. Experience means nothing to her; because in some way she always manages to get protected, no matter what she does. She's skated over thin ice all her life — she *courts* the danger signals; and just when anybody else

would fall through, an unknown somebody reaches her a hand out of the universe and lands her safe! Gad! and to think that it was you that helped her!

EMILY

I don't think that would appeal to her sense of humor.

HUBERT

Did she bring over much stuff?

EMILY

They said about six thousand, off hand.

HUBERT

Six thou . . . Phew! Well, that's *her* affair. But sit down a moment.

[*He puts her on settle, then sits at right of the table.*]

Tell me, how did *you* get into the Customs office?

EMILY

I got tired of the paper. My friend Hildegarde Sanbury suggested the customs, and helped me get it.

HUBERT

Oh, Mrs. Sanbury's a friend of yours.

EMILY

Yes, why?

HUBERT

They were here this morning.

EMILY

Were they? Isn't Hildegarde fine?

HUBERT

Tell me about *him!*

EMILY

You mean Lawrence?

HUBERT

Yes.

EMILY

They say he's a genius, full of all wonderful things, and just waiting for his opportunity to express them.

HUBERT

Yes, just the type!

EMILY

What type?

HUBERT

Do you know where he and Caroline met?

EMILY

I've no idea; except that they spent some time together in Italy.

HUBERT

What was he doing there?

EMILY

Studying and making sketches. Hildegarde slaved and saved every cent she could to send him over.

HUBERT

So this is her latest!

EMILY

What do you mean?

HUBERT

I wonder if I can explain it. Caroline has a mania for depredating the next generation. She poses to herself as the heroine of a belated romance.

EMILY

But she knows Lawrence is married; doesn't she?

HUBERT

She prefers them married. Takes all the perfume and the blossoms, and lets the wife grub at the roots. She likes to be the destiny and let the wife assume the utility. Does he love his wife?

EMILY

Why, of course, devotedly. That's the finest thing about him.

HUBERT

Better yet. She enjoys making a test of her power.

EMILY

[*Impulsively.*]

Hildegarde's the best in the world, Hubert, and . . .

HUBERT

Then I pity her.

EMILY

You don't mean your wife will hurt Hildegarde, do you?

HUBERT

[*Bitterly.*]

She won't bleed; that is, outwardly. She'll just wake up and find her happiness evaporated.

EMILY

You mustn't allow it. She's just a child before a sophisticated person.

HUBERT

[*Desperately.*]

What can I do? Caroline has done this all her life; and as she operates under the protection of my name, I've had apparently to stand by and sanction it.

EMILY

Can't you stop her?

HUBERT

[*Again walking about.*]

How? You'd respect her if she showed one real emotion. She's physically chaste; but is absolutely unchastened in soul; and yet she feeds on the souls of others. That's how she keeps young. She's a mental *Bluebeard*, and I'm the hotel clerk for her castle . . . I know where all her miserable relics hang . . . What rooms and what days of their lives they've offered her!

EMILY

Why, this is horrible, Hubert!

HUBERT

[*Continuing.*]

I'd give my eyes to stop her! If not for the sake of others, for my own sake! She's broken me! I tried to get free for years at the beginning. But she plays so absolutely safe . . . She protects herself so completely that she is unassailable.

EMILY

Can't *he* be warned?

HUBERT

Not if she gets him first. Her kind of poison strikes them blind. There's nothing to be done for him. Just *you* keep out of her way.

EMILY

Don't worry. I will. Well, I must get back to work.

[*She starts to go again.*]

HUBERT

My dear, why will you work? Why won't you let me take care of you?

EMILY

I wish to earn my own living, Hubert. You know that.

HUBERT

Yes. But I want to ask you . . . Why have you avoided me for this long time?

EMILY.

Hubert, I didn't want to write it; but it's over between us.

HUBERT

[*After a pause.*]

Yes, I've realized that.

EMILY

[*Very tenderly.*]

Hubert, I've no reproach to make you; and I don't want you to reproach me, or to feel any bitterness. What we gave was a free gift from both — a free gift and no regrets. A break had to come some time, I suppose; and as soon as I met *him*, I — I realized that it had to come right away.

[*Looking away from* HUBERT.]

He asked no questions; but that's why you haven't seen or heard from me. Hubert, I'm going to marry Michael Krellin.

HUBERT

[*After a pause.*]

Good luck to you.

[*He takes her hand in both of his.*]

But I thought you didn't believe in marriage.

EMILY

Neither did he. But I'm afraid we both believe in marriage now. I can't tell you how it happened; but it's *different*, Hubert . . . That's all . . . I know you'll understand.

[HUBERT *nods and releases her hand. She goes toward the hall.*]

HUBERT

Emily . . .

[*She stops and turns.*]

We've been good chums for a long time; and, do you know, you've never allowed me to give you anything?

EMILY

That was our agreement, Hubert.

HUBERT

Yes; but I want you to promise me this. If you should ever get into a blind alley, and need anything, a friend or money, and need it without strings, I want you to think of me. I'd like to feel you'd do that much for the sake of Auld Lang Syne.

EMILY

[*Coming to him.*]

All right. I promise.

[*Extends her hand.*]

Good-by.

HUBERT

[*Quietly, as he takes her hand.*]

Krellin's a very lucky fellow.

EMILY

That's like you, Hubert.

HUBERT

I'll call you a cab.

EMILY

Never mind. Don't come with me, please. I'll run right along.

[*She turns and says very tenderly:*]

Good-by.

HUBERT

Good-by.

[*She exits through the hall. After she is off,* HUBERT *stands looking after her until the front door is heard to close. He drops his hands disconsolately and walks mechanically to the table at center. His eyes fall upon the envelope still lying there. He takes it up. His mood changes. He gets a sudden idea. He looks up, throws the envelope down on the table again with an angry gesture, and goes with vehement determination toward the stairs. He pauses at the bottom of the stairs, shakes his head perplexed, and then decides upon a different attack. He calls very pleasantly:*]

HUBERT

Ah, Caroline!

CAROLINE

[*Up stairs.*]

Yes.

HUBERT

I'd like to see you for a moment.

CAROLINE

Are you alone?

HUBERT

[*Still pleasantly.*]

Yes. Oh, yes.

CAROLINE

I'll be right down.

[HUBERT *walks round the room gathering his confident anger with every step. He hears her coming, controls his humor, and stands with his hands behind him, full of exultant exasperation, as she enters.*]

CAROLINE

Did you settle it?

HUBERT

[*Deliberately giving her a chair.*]

One moment.

CAROLINE

Susan is waiting me for luncheon.

HUBERT

[*Decidedly.*]

Very sorry.

CAROLINE

[*Inquiringly.*]

Well?

HUBERT

Very sorry, but I'm afraid *I'll* need some of your time this afternoon.

CAROLINE

[*After sitting, looks up demurely.*]

What for?

HUBERT

[*With great distinctness.*]

The Customs office.

CAROLINE

Oh, no. You ventured to criticize me. You asked me to leave it to you. I do.

HUBERT

[*Losing control.*]

About six thousand dollars' duty for you to pay!

CAROLINE

I? Perfectly ridiculous! I settled it. Of course, if you . . .

HUBERT

[*Angrily.*]

You did, eh?

CAROLINE

[*Laughing.*]

If you were fool enough to let that woman —

HUBERT

If "that woman" treated you as you deserve —

CAROLINE

I think I treated her very well.

HUBERT

It was only out of consideration for me that she —

CAROLINE

Oh, for *you!*

HUBERT

Yes, for me. If "that woman" didn't happen to be a friend of mine, you might be publicly disgraced by now as well as I!

CAROLINE

[*Laughing.*]

A friend of yours! Why, really, Hubert, I must say you have strange friends — A woman that would use her friendship to extort money . . .

HUBERT

[*Enraged.*]

Listen to me! Your trunks are in the hands of the appraisers. You've been caught in a ridiculous lie; and she —

CAROLINE

[*Triumphantly.*]

She can't say that, because *I bribed her!* Your friend!

HUBERT

[*Flinging the envelope on the table.*]

There's your two hundred dollars, and you'll have to pay six *thousand* dollars on your trunks, and be grateful to *Miss Madden* for having saved you!

CAROLINE

To whom?

HUBERT

[*With great confidence.*]

Miss Emily Madden, the woman you maligned.

CAROLINE

[*In a moment of rage.*]

She looked me over! She dared!

HUBERT

[*Gloating.*]

It was Miss Madden.

[*He walks away from her, turns with supreme elation.*]

Yes.

CAROLINE

[*In a peal of laughter.*]

Then I understand perfectly why she came to you! But I'm not so easy. The matter of the trunks was settled.

[*Walking to the hall.*]

Of course, if you feel that you are subject to her extortions, or that perhaps you want to give her a token of your gratitude, that's *your* affair.

[*Turning to him.*]

It would really be indelicate of you to insist that *I* should pay your *mistress!*

HUBERT

[*Foiled and following her furiously.*]

You . . . [*Chokes.*]

CAROLINE

[*Very pleasantly.*]

Good morning. Susan is waiting.

[*She exits as the Curtain descends.*]

ACT II

ACT II

The stage presents the combined kitchen and living room of the SANBURY *flat in the model tenements, New York City. The whole atmosphere betrays great neatness, but equal constriction and narrowness of quarters. At the first glance, the room is apparently all doors. The walls are done in waterproof white. There is a window in the rear wall, a little to the left. This opens on a fire-escape, and gives a view of other tenements in the rear. There is a shade over the window, which is further hung with chintz curtains, that are visibly cheap, but in good taste as far as the design is concerned. In front of the window is an upholstered window-seat. To the left of the window is a small serving table, with cruets of vinegar and oil, and a salad-bowl upon it. Below this table hang sundry cooking utensils. Next to the table stands the gas-stove with a coffee-pot upon it. High on the wall above the gas-stove is a gas-meter of the kind commonly in use in the tenements. It is automatic, and releases a*

supply of gas only when a quarter is dropped into it. At the left of the stove and in the corner of the room is a combination sink and wash-tub of white porcelain ware. The dwellers in the tenements use the wash-tub as an ice-box. At the opening of the act, a four-fold screen hides both the sink and the stove from view. However, above the screen, a towel rack with clean dish towels is visible. In the upper left wall of the room is a door leading to LAWRENCE'S *bedroom. Below this, there is a combination wall book-case and mirror. The book shelf is jammed with well-used books. Directly underneath the book-case stands a flat table upon which are a typewriter and a telephone.*

In the rear wall of the room, to the right of the window, is the door leading from the hall. To the right of this is the dumb-waiter shaft, with a sliding panel door. In the right wall of the room is the entrance to HILDEGARDE'S *bedroom. A little below this, is the door leading to the bathroom.*

There is an electric bell above the hall door, another electric bell above the dumb-waiter. Next to the dumb-waiter is a speaking tube, which rejoices in a very shrill whistle.

Running around the whole room is a plate shelf with colored plates upon it. There are framed pic-

tures of Tolstoy, Ruskin and Prince Kropotkin conspicuously hung upon the walls.

At the center of the room is a large mission table, set with a plate, knife, cup and saucer, napkin and a bowl of fruit. The morning newspaper lies opened. Between the dumb-waiter and the door to HILDEGARDE'S *room is a large mission cupboard. There are five chairs in the room. Three are around the table, and one is placed before the typewriting stand. There is a hat-rack upon the wall next to the hall door.*

It is about eleven-thirty in the morning, some weeks after the preceding act. The blind is up, and the room is very light.

[*Off rear a hand-organ is heard playing.* HILDEGARDE *is discovered at the typewriter. She works on, disregarding the hum of incoherent tenement life about her. The organ stops. A street vendor is heard hoarsely crying his wares:*]

VENDOR'S VOICE

[*Off.*]

Apples! Apples! Ten cents a qu-a-art!

WOMAN'S VOICE

[*Off.*]

Hey-hey! Epples! Yas — you! Noomber seven! A helfft quart!

VENDOR'S VOICE

[*Off.*]

All right, number seven!

WOMAN'S VOICE

[*Off.*]

I schick de nikkel down.

[*The* VENDOR'S *voice ceases. Suddenly the sound of a window crashing is heard quite close.* HILDEGARDE *pauses attentively.* LAWRENCE *bursts into the room from the left. He appears in a dressing gown, with a ball in his hand. He is shaved, but still has lather on his face.*]

LAWRENCE

Look here!

HILDEGARDE

Was it your window?

LAWRENCE

Almost my *head.* Say, does anybody own those brats?

HILDEGARDE

[*Goes quickly to the window, throws it up and calls out:*]

Vincent! Joey! Don't run away. I told you, you mustn't play ball in the court. I'll have to tell your mothers.

LAWRENCE

[*Giving her the ball, which she puts on a shelf.*]

A lot of good that'll do.

HILDEGARDE

It's hard to be severe with them.

[LAWRENCE *goes toward the bathroom.*]

They oughtn't play in the street. Little Jamie Kirk was killed by a car last week.

LAWRENCE

There's plenty of them left.

[*The dumb-waiter whistle gives a piercing scream.*]

What's loose again?

[*He opens the tube, listens and yells down.*]

No! We don't want any apples!

HILDEGARDE

[*Opening dumb-waiter.*]

Wait, Lawrence.

[*She calls down quietly.*]

Mrs. Pannakin is number seven on the other side.

[*Shuts dumb-waiter door.*]

Will you have breakfast now?

LAWRENCE

What time is it?

HILDEGARDE

[*Taking screen away from stove.*]

About half-past eleven.

[*She tries to light gas-stove.*]

LAWRENCE

We've got to hurry.

[*Turning.*]

What's the matter now?

HILDEGARDE

The meter. Have you a quarter?

LAWRENCE

[*Giving her a coin.*]

No credit there, eh!

[*He goes into bathroom.*]

[*She gets up on chair and puts coin in the meter, winds it and proceeds to heat the coffee.*]

HILDEGARDE

[*Calling to him.*]

It'll be ready in a moment. You finish dressing.

[LAWRENCE *enters from the bathroom with a towel, drying his face.*]

LAWRENCE

What have you ordered for lunch?

HILDEGARDE

I told Mrs. Pannakin to take especial pains to-day.

LAWRENCE

[*Grimly disgusted.*]

Mrs. Knollys will enjoy one of Mrs. Pannakin's co-operative dinners; where all the last week's vegetables co-operate to make this week's soups! I wonder why they want to come here anyway.

HILDEGARDE

[*Slowly.*]

I can't imagine.

LAWRENCE

[*Reproachfully.*]

You invited them. I tried to head it off.

HILDEGARDE

They are your friends; and you know I never miss a chance of interesting rich people in this philanthropy. Go, dear, and finish dressing.

[*He exits to his room.*]

[*She takes a script from the typewriter, folds and signs it, then addresses it in an envelope, and stamps it. She hums while she works.* LAWRENCE *re-enters carrying his collar, tie, coat and vest. He wrestles with his collar and then throws the other things down.*]

LAWRENCE

This life is killing me! I'm as nervous as a cat!

HILDEGARDE

Didn't you sleep well?

LAWRENCE

[*Pointing to the typewriter.*]

Sleep! What time was it when you began banging that instrument of torture?

HILDEGARDE

I had to get my copy ready for this evening's edition.

LAWRENCE

[*Continuing to dress.*]

What is it?

HILDEGARDE

A report of last evening's Labor Meeting for Krellin's column.

LAWRENCE

You know, you'll have to stop this kind of thing. That's if you care anything for me.

[*She gets butter out of improvised ice-box in the wash-tubs.*]

HILDEGARDE

[*Cheerfully.*]

My little writing and my job here are at present our only means of support.

[*She puts butter on table.*]

LAWRENCE

Oh, don't rub it in.

[*With a change.*]

I'm sorry enough to see you slave the way you do; but Krellin and your friends are attacking the very people from whom I'm going to get my living.

HILDEGARDE

[*Cheerfully.*]

Yes, Mrs. Knollys took the trouble to inform me of that some weeks ago.

LAWRENCE

Well, they don't *like* to hear now their money is made.

HILDEGARDE

There's very little danger of their listening to me.

LAWRENCE

And how about Mr. Knollys?

HILDEGARDE

He and I understand each other completely.

LAWRENCE

Yes, no doubt. But this is how it's worked out for me. I've finished the preliminary plans, and should have got the first instalment to begin my work three days ago.

HILDEGARDE

Well?

LAWRENCE

[*Continuing.*]

Your articles have driven him down South, to look over that factory of his.

HILDEGARDE

Oh, I'm glad of that.

LAWRENCE

I'm glad you're glad. But I get not a cent till he O.K.'s the plans.

HILDEGARDE

[*Cutting bread for him.*]

When does he get back?

LAWRENCE

He was expected yesterday.

[*Turning away.*]

Oh, I don't want a lot of breakfast. I'm rickety! I'm all in! Just give me some coffee!

HILDEGARDE

[*Getting coffee from gas-stove.*]

It's ready now.

[*Pouring it.*]

Where do you go to-night?

LAWRENCE

Mrs. Millette.

HILDEGARDE

Mrs. Who?

LAWRENCE

Millette,— what's the difference what her name is? Mrs. Knollys says she wants to build a house.

HILDEGARDE

Good.

LAWRENCE

I'm invited to dine with her and go to the play to-night to talk things over.

HILDEGARDE

Any prospects?

LAWRENCE

[*With a tone of justification.*]

There's a social side to my job. You must see that. I've got to make that solid first.

HILDEGARDE

Yes.

[*Pause.*]

LAWRENCE

Why? You're not offended that you're not asked, are you?

HILDEGARDE

Oh, dear no; I'm thinking only of what they'll think of you.

LAWRENCE

In what way?

HILDEGARDE

I don't want you to be known as the kind of man these women can invite without his wife.

LAWRENCE

And I don't want to be known as the kind of man that always drags his wife about, either.

[*He opens the newspaper.*]

HILDEGARDE

It's an affront to you, not to me.

[*The bell rings over the hall door. Opening the door.*]

Oh, thank you.

[*Takes letters from some one outside.*]

Wait, will you drop this in the mail for me?

[*She fetches her typewritten article and an orange. As she passes* LAWRENCE *she says:*]

These are for you.

[*She gives him some letters. Then she returns to the door and gives the letter and the orange to the little girl evidently standing outside.*]

Here, Annie. Thank you.

[*She closes the door.*]

LAWRENCE

[*Reading a letter which he has opened during the above business.*]

From my old firm.

[*Proudly.*]

They offer me a raise of ten a week if I'll come back.

HILDEGARDE

[*Looking through her mail.*]

Bills, bills, bills.

[*She sits at her typewriting table.*]

LAWRENCE

They'll have to wait. *I've* got to.

[*Showing his letter.*]

How would you answer them?

HILDEGARDE

That you must decide yourself.

LAWRENCE

[*Pointing to the bills humorously.*]

Say, ain't it the devil how the money goes?

HILDEGARDE

[*With a smile.*]

I can manage the necessities; if you'll keep down the luxuries.

LAWRENCE

[*Looking at a bill.*]

Seven dollars and fifty cents for flowers.

[*Looks up at her.*]

HILDEGARDE

To whom did you send them?

LAWRENCE

Mrs. Knollys, of course. She needs flowers. Always has them.

[*With attempted justification.*]

I eat two meals a day on her; I've got to keep my end up some way.

HILDEGARDE

Certainly, by all means.

LAWRENCE

[*With another letter.*]

Tailor's bill. One hundred and twenty-five cold plunks.

[*Boyishly.*]

That's the swell dress suit, all right.

[*Looks at her.*]

Do you know, I'm sometimes tempted to drop in and see my old firm; not that I'm aching to go back to them, but —

HILDEGARDE

You might call on them, and tell them what you're doing.

LAWRENCE

What do you think?

HILDEGARDE

I'd play the game out for all it's worth. It's no use weakening now.

LAWRENCE

[*Pointing to bills.*]

What will we do with these?

HILDEGARDE

[*Encouragingly.*]

We'll meet them with your first instalment.

[*The bell over the dumb-waiter rings loudly.*]

LAWRENCE

[*Going to dumb-waiter.*]

I'll open.

[*He opens door. The bell continues its ringing.*]

VOICE

[*Below, yelling up.*]

Sanbury?

LAWRENCE

[*Shouting down.*]

Yes.

[*Roaring.*]

Take your finger off that bell!

[*Bell stops.*]

VOICE

[*Cheerily.*]

Thought you might be a-hangin' out the wash!

LAWRENCE

No, I'm not hangin' out the wash! What do you want?

VOICE

Look out! It's coming up!!

[LAWRENCE *just ducks back as the dumb-waiter shoots up.*]

HILDEGARDE

It's the grape-fruit and salad from the grocer's.

[LAWRENCE *takes it off.*]

Put them in there.

[*He puts them as she indicates inside the wash-tubs.*]

LAWRENCE

What time is it now?

HILDEGARDE

After twelve. You'll have to hurry.

LAWRENCE

[*Suddenly.*]

Say, can't we have the screens up?

[*Putting them hastily back before the stove.*]

And you know, there's nothing very handsome about this view.

[*Jerks down the blind over window rear.*]

HILDEGARDE

Larrie, please don't fuss.

[*He has gone quickly for his coat hanging on a peg behind his door. He re-enters struggling into his coat.*]

LAWRENCE

Say, my room looks like hell!

HILDEGARDE

Agnes will clear it up while I'm setting the table.

LAWRENCE

[*Nervously.*]

Where is she? You know she never comes when you want her!

HILDEGARDE

[*Clearing table quietly.*]

She'll *be* here.

LAWRENCE

[*Attempting to fix a picture straight on the wall.*]

Have all your orders come?

HILDEGARDE

Yes. Please don't get nervous.

LAWRENCE

[*Turning nervously.*]

Well, I'm only trying to help *you* out. I pass the grocer's.

HILDEGARDE

[*Pausing.*]

You silly boy. I guess you can't help fussing.

LAWRENCE

I like things to be right.

[*Suddenly.*]

Are you going to wear that dress?

HILDEGARDE

What's the matter with my dress?

LAWRENCE

[*Dubiously.*]

Oh, I suppose it's all right; only I thought your green — and honestly now, your feet aren't as big as that. It's those Consumer's League boots, just like your gloves! You'd wear anything with a Trade Union label on it, wouldn't you? No matter what it looked like!

HILDEGARDE

They won't see my feet.

LAWRENCE

Won't they?

[*Exploding.*]

That skirt hikes!!

HILDEGARDE

[*With an obvious effort to be patient.*]

I'll be all right; if you'll only get out before you make *me* nervous.

[*A bell rings. He goes toward dumb-waiter again.*]

[*Lifting the blind he has pulled down.*]

No. That's the door. I guess it's Agnes.

LAWRENCE

I hope so.

[*He opens the hall door and* MURTHA *bounds into the room.*]

Oh, Lord!

MURTHA

[*Effusively.*]

Th' top o' th' marnin' to you, Mishter Sanbury!

[*Seeing* HILDEGARDE.]

Ah, Sishter! Shure, yer hushband do be lookin' loike a capitalisht to-day.

[*Shakes both her hands.*]

LAWRENCE

Where's Agnes?

MURTHA

[*With feigned surprise.*]

Ah, Agnes, is it?

[*Cunningly.*]

Shure, she's all roight. She do be havin' th' gran' good loock to-day!

LAWRENCE

Where is she?

MURTHA

She's got a job to-day, yis, wid Mishter Curtis, her auld boss.

HILDEGARDE

Why didn't you tell me she couldn't come?

MURTHA

Oi wouldn't dishappoint ye. Oi know yer goin' to have a shindy; and is it any wonder that Oi'm here before th' wind.

HILDEGARDE

[*Practically.*]

Then go right to Mr. Sanbury's room and clear it up.

MURTHA

Shure Oi will; whoy wouldn't Oi?

[*She exits left with aged agility.*]

LAWRENCE

Can't you get rid of her?

HILDEGARDE

I've got to have somebody.

LAWRENCE

Mrs. Knollys hates the sight of her.

[*To the ceiling.*]

Oh, we're going to have a lovely party!

HILDEGARDE

[*Nervously.*]

Then call it off entirely.

LAWRENCE

I tried to. But she was determined to come here to-day.

HILDEGARDE

[*Abruptly.*]

Then stop complaining! I wish you'd go!

[*Seeing the futility of chiding him, she changes to a very reassuring manner.*]

Now go, dear. You look very handsome.

[*She adjusts his necktie and goes with him toward hall door. He has his hands in his pockets.*]

LAWRENCE

Do I look like ready money?

HILDEGARDE

[*Laughing.*]

Yes.

LAWRENCE

[*Shamefaced.*]

Well, I haven't got any. Mine's in the gas meter.

HILDEGARDE

How much will you need?

LAWRENCE

I've got to get those dames here, haven't I? And I might be stuck for a taxicab. You know, such things *have happened!*

HILDEGARDE

[*Going to cupboard.*]

Wait.

[*She brings out a china bank and shakes it.*]

LAWRENCE

What's that?

HILDEGARDE

My linen bank.

[*Shaking it.*]

There must be several dollars in it.

[*She breaks it with a knife; and a mass of small coins is exposed.*]

LAWRENCE

[*Sweeping up the coins.*]

I feel like a man that's robbed a nursery.

[*As he puts them uncounted into his pocket, some of them roll on the floor.*]

HILDEGARDE

The grocer will be glad to give you bills.

LAWRENCE

It 'ud take me an hour to count up this chicken feed.

[*Suddenly.*]

There's some on the floor.

[*As he starts to lean over, his soft hat falls from his head. He steps on it.*]

Gad!! Sure thing! This is my lucky day!

[*He punches his hat savagely.*]

HILDEGARDE

I'll pick it up.

[*She does so.*]

Larrie dear, will you let me say something? And you won't get angry?

LAWRENCE

[*Defensively.*]

Well . . .?

HILDEGARDE

[*Going to him.*]

Dearest, first try to be calm — for your own sake, don't be irritated. It's unbecoming.

LAWRENCE

Oh, I'm all right; but all these little things . . .

HILDEGARDE

I know, dear, it *is* hard; but for the sake of my pride in you, be careful about showing any impatience to me, particularly in front of Mrs. Knollys. I don't care how angry you get when we're alone. I understand. *She* doesn't. And judging from the last time she saw us together, she might think . . .

LAWRENCE

Please don't refer to that again. I thought you had forgotten it.

[*Contritely.*]

I lost my head.

HILDEGARDE

If you remember it, I shall forget it. [*She kisses him.*] Now, good-by, dear.

LAWRENCE

Good-by.

[*He exits through the hall door, as* MURTHA *re-enters from his room at the left.*]

MURTHA

That's done.

HILDEGARDE

Then you can lay the table.

MURTHA

Shure Oi will, me dear.

[*She goes quickly to the cupboard for the necessary things.*]

[*While* MURTHA *is busied at the table, center,* HILDEGARDE *gets the salad and grape-fruit from wash-tubs. She cleans and prepares them during the following scene.*]

HILDEGARDE

You know, Mrs. Murtha, it isn't quite honest for you to say that Agnes will go to places, and then you go to them yourself.

MURTHA

[*Busying herself at table.*]

No, ma'm.

[*She crosses herself with a mechanically devout expression.*]

HILDEGARDE

Then why do you do it?

MURTHA

Whoy wouldn't Oi? There's Aggie, th' Lord love her, can hardly keep herself, and Tim's no good at all, and Mary in th' hoshpital, and Joey wid th' haughty lady that he's married and th' twins!

HILDEGARDE

But aren't you getting a little too old for . . .?

MURTHA

[*Interrupting savagely.*]

There yer sayin' it! And d'ye see, if Oi wuz to tell thim: "It's me, ma'm, that's lookin' fer th' job," Oi'd nivir git it! And a little loi loike that doan't hurrt.

[*Wheedling.*]

Fer Oi'm as shtrong as ivir Oi wuz.

HILDEGARDE

[*With a sigh of futility.*]

The knives on the *right* side.

MURTHA

[*Very gently.*]

Yis, ma'm.

[*Pause.*]

HILDEGARDE

Have you ever waited on a table?

MURTHA

Me! Naw, ma'm.

HILDEGARDE

[*Pausing.*]

Then perhaps —

MURTHA

[*Confidently, while* HILDEGARDE *works at straightening out the table.*]

Ah, ye jusht tell me what to do, and Oi kin do it. Shure, Oi'm not wan av thim thick Micks.

HILDEGARDE

Then first of all you must roll down your sleeves.

MURTHA

[*Obeying like a child.*]

Yis, ma'm. Yer a laidy. Oi can't say naw liss than that.

HILDEGARDE

[*Smiling.*]

What is a lady?

MURTHA

Ha! A laidy is wan av thim that has all th' beer an' skittles, an' doan't have to do no worrk.

[*Laughing.*]

Shure, Oi allus says moy auld man's th' loocky laidy av our house. Me an' his chilthren does th'

worrk fer him; an' he schmokes in th' corner all day long.

HILDEGARDE

Well, *I* don't smoke in the corner all day long.

MURTHA

Ah, doan't ye be lishtenin' to me gush!

HILDEGARDE

You just bring the things from Mrs. Pannakin to me.

MURTHA

Yis, ma'm.

HILDEGARDE

And if there's anything you don't know how to do, you just ask me *quietly*, and I'll tell you.

MURTHA

Yis, ma'm.

[*She pricks up her ears.*]

What wuz that!!!

[*She makes a dive for the window rear and looks out.*]

That's Mickey Doolan! Shure it's Doolan!!

[*She flings open the window. As she does so, a violent quarrel in Irish between a man and woman is heard.* MURTHA *yells out:*]

Mickey! Mickey!! You lave her be!

[*Solemnly.*]

Moy Gawd! He's hit her, th' poor woman, and she wid th' young un comin'!

[*She jumps up on the sill.*]

Mickey! Mickey!! You lave her be!! Fer th' love o' God and th' shame o' man, you let her be!! You dhrunken pesht!

[*During the above speech,* HILDEGARDE *has tried vainly to hold* MURTHA *back and stop her yelling; but* MURTHA *has got speechless with rage. She tears loose from* HILDEGARDE, *goes through the window and is heard clattering down the fire-escape execrating* DOOLAN.]

HILDEGARDE

[*Calling.*]

Mrs. Murtha!! Wait — Mrs. Murtha!!!

[MURTHA *has disappeared into the mêlée. The row is heard suddenly to increase with* MURTHA'S *advent. A woman's shrill scream is heard, and then a man's growl. The row increases.* HILDEGARDE, *seeing the futility of trying to control things at a distance, decides to follow. She also exits over the fire-escape, and descends.* MURTHA'S *high voice is heard above the noise, calling for "Tim." Then some other women's voices are heard in high excitement calling. A hushed subsidence due to* HILDEGARDE'S *appear-*

ance follows. Finally an absolute pause of silence. Then a key is heard turning in the lock of door from the hall. The door opens. Whistling is heard on the steps. The whistling evidently is paced to keep time with some one climbing slowly up stairs. LAWRENCE *enters.*]

BOYS' VOICES

[*Outside, heard as the door opens.*]

Give us the ball! You got it!

LAWRENCE

Go on, boys, chase yourselves.

[*To* CAROLINE.]

Come in.

[CAROLINE *enters.*]

BOYS' VOICES

[*Derisively.*]

Git a hair-cut! Git a hair-cut! G'wan, you dude!

LAWRENCE

[*Closing the door.*]

This is the living room. Plain living and high thinking.

CAROLINE

[*Laughing.*]

I should admit it's rather high.

LAWRENCE

[*Calling.*]

Hildegarde! We're here!

[*To* CAROLINE.]

Sit down, please.

CAROLINE

[*Not sitting.*]

Are you sure that she expected me?

LAWRENCE

Certainly. She may be in my room.

[*Crosses left and opens his door.*]

CAROLINE

[*Crossing.*]

I want to see where you sleep.

LAWRENCE

Behold my couch of dreams.

CAROLINE

[*Murmuring.*]

You poor boy!

LAWRENCE

[*Closing window rear.*]

I don't care where I sleep, as long as I've a place to *work* in.

[*He starts to pull down the blind.*]

CAROLINE

What's there?

LAWRENCE

[*Cheerfully.*]

Excellent view of a fire-escape and Mrs. Pannakin's kitchen, where our nectar and ambrosia are prepared; which later you are to be privileged to taste.

CAROLINE

[*After looking.*]

Ah!

LAWRENCE

[*He pulls down the blind. Then he goes toward* HILDEGARDE'S *room at right, calling.*]

Hildegarde!

CAROLINE

[*Insinuatingly.*]

Do you object to this little chat with me alone?

LAWRENCE

Of course not! But I wanted to leave you here with Hildegarde, while I looked for Miss Ambie. She may have trouble finding us.

CAROLINE

I hope so.

[*He looks at her.*]

I have trouble enough in losing her.

LAWRENCE

[*Laughing.*]

Do you know, you sometimes perplex me terribly?

CAROLINE

[*Sitting.*]

Do I?

[*Smiles.*]

Sit down and let me look at you.

[*He sits and looks at her inquiringly.*]

I want to see if I can fit you into this environment. How do you manage it?

LAWRENCE

Oh, Caroline, you're so used to luxury, you can't understand how a little plain living rather helps a fellow to dream true. That's why I didn't want you to come down. I was afraid it would discourage you.

CAROLINE

[*Slowly and with a caressing glance.*]

It has made many things about you very clear to me.

LAWRENCE

There's nothing complex about me.

CAROLINE

Yes, if you can do what you have done down here, what will you do, when —? Oh, it's only because you are *you* that all this squalor hasn't killed your genius!

LAWRENCE

[*Humorously.*]

Oh, come now, Caroline, it's hard for me not to agree with you when you speak of me as a genius and all that. I tell you frankly I adore it; but I'm really quite an ordinary sort of a chap. I've got enough ambition and enthusiasm to draw cheques on my future. I hope I've learned my job; so if the big things come along, I'll be able to measure up to my opportunities. And — when I'm with you, I feel my luck is with me.

CAROLINE

Then my faith in you does really help you, does it?

LAWRENCE

How can you ask that?

CAROLINE

Keep your confidence, Lawrence, but remember that patience is a virtue of the underlings. *I* don't possess that virtue; and you cannot afford to.

LAWRENCE

What's that to do with it?

CAROLINE

[*Vehemently.*]

Oh, I can't bear to see you in circumstances like these! I can't lie to you! It's useless to disguise it. I hate to see you pulling down the blinds! I hate anything that ties you here! The world is full of people that can plod and wait for opportunities. *We've* got to *make* them and before it is too late! I knew that you had wings the first time that I saw you. I hate the idea of a half a loaf, when by the right of the power in you, you are entitled to the whole! I hate even the patchwork you're doing on my house!

[*She rises.*]

LAWRENCE

Don't say that! The work you've given me has enabled me to leave my firm with a free conscience.

CAROLINE

[*Smiling.*]

What have *you* to do with conscience? People have conscience only when they *fail.*

LAWRENCE

[*Rising.*]

By Jove, you have a liberating way of saying things!

CAROLINE

Have I helped to liberate you?

LAWRENCE

I've chucked a lot of litter since I've met you.

CAROLINE

That's right. I love to hear you say that. Oh, I want to see you free — free from all the petty scruples that would hinder you! That's my work now. For while you're building houses, *I* shall be building your career.

[LAWRENCE *takes her enthusiastically and impulsively into his arms, and kisses her full on the mouth. He looks at her as if hypnotized. She is full of the disguised triumph in her seduction. They pause.* LAWRENCE *becomes thoughtful with a disturbing realization of what he has done.*]

LAWRENCE

I beg your pardon.

CAROLINE

For what?

LAWRENCE

Forgive me. I had no right to —

CAROLINE

[*Interrupting.*]

You have a right to everything if you only want it *enough!*

[*Passionately.*]

I want *you* —

[*Quickly correcting herself.*]

I *want* you to succeed; and we shall find a means.

[*Suddenly.*]

You must get that studio immediately.

LAWRENCE

[*Dazed.*]

What —?

CAROLINE

[*In a low voice.*]

You can't work any longer at my house.

[*He looks up.*]

Hubert arrives to-day.

LAWRENCE

[*Absently.*]

Good!

CAROLINE

A little less enthusiasm, please.

LAWRENCE

I mean, then I can get his O.K. on the plans.

CAROLINE

You'll get your first instalment to-morrow. You've got to draw up plans of an Italian country house for Edwalyn Millette.

LAWRENCE

She has decided?

CAROLINE

She will. She has money; and I can tell her exactly what she thinks she wants.

[*Humorously.*]

There I can help *you* too. You'll need your studio.

[*Dreamily.*]

I know exactly how we'll furnish it. I know just where I shall sit and pour your tea.

[*The bell rings over the door. They start.*]

And we won't have bells like that!

LAWRENCE

That's Hildegarde.

[*Turning.*]

I'll tell her of the studio.

CAROLINE

[*Quickly.*]

Not a word. Leave that to me.

[*He hesitates.*]

Oh, we drive to Edwalyn's Long Island place this afternoon. I want you to see the grounds before you dine with her to-night.

LAWRENCE

Oh, all right.

[*He opens the door to the hall, and discovers* SUSAN AMBIE.]

Come in, Miss Ambie.

SUSAN

[*Entering, her hat awry.*]

Oh, there you are!

[*Grieved.*]

Well, Carrie, I *must say* —

CAROLINE

We decided you weren't coming.

SUSAN

[*Looking at her watch.*]

I thought I was on time.

CAROLINE

Think again, my dear.

LAWRENCE

Did you have trouble finding us?

SUSAN

[*Straightening her hat and speaking to* LAWRENCE.]

You oughtn't let those children play ball in the street. Their ball just missed me!

CAROLINE

Too bad! Too bad!

SUSAN

Carrie, I've something I must say to you . . .

[*Looks significantly at* LAWRENCE.]

LAWRENCE

Excuse me. I'll hunt up Hildegarde. She may be in her office.

[*As soon as* LAWRENCE *exits* SUSAN *betrays a most uncontrolled and nervous anxiety. She is nervous almost to the point of incoherency.*]

CAROLINE

Well, what is it?

SUSAN

Carrie, I'm sorry . . . but I haven't slept! I can't take any more responsibility. That's all.

CAROLINE

Then don't.

SUSAN

[*On the raw.*]

They ask me if I'm *blind!!*

CAROLINE

Well, if you're not, what do you care?

SUSAN

[*Gushily.*]

People are talking about you and Lawrence. Of course, *I* understand — but . . .

CAROLINE

[*Interrupting.*]

If you give your time thinking about what other people say, you'll never have time for anything else.

SUSAN

[*Impatiently.*]

But people know that Hubert's been away . . . and they see you and Lawrence together everywhere, and . . .

CAROLINE

There's comfort in that. Just think what they imagine when they *don't* see us.

SUSAN

My dear, you can't stop wicked tongues from wagging. . . . Of course, I tried to defend you all I could. . . . People are saying that you've lost your head over this young architect that you have *living* with you in your house. *Everybody's* talking —

CAROLINE

Everybody has nothing else to do.

SUSAN

Where is his wife? Perhaps *she's* heard things and *means* to be rude!

CAROLINE

Rude to *me?* She couldn't be.

SUSAN

You know, Lawrence tried to discourage our coming. What *can* you and she have in common?

CAROLINE

[*Meaningly.*]

Nothing! Lawrence sees that already. When *she* realizes that we can have *nothing in common* — not even her — well, the rest is easy.

SUSAN

[*Alarmed.*]

Carrie! You're up to something mad!

[CAROLINE *laughs.*]

I haven't seen you look or act like this, not since . . . Italy!

[*Suddenly with a cry.*]

Yes, they're right! It's true!!

CAROLINE

[*Calmly.*]

What?

SUSAN

You've lost your head about him.

CAROLINE

[*Recklessly.*]

Oh, there's no law against a woman losing her *head.*

SUSAN

But his wife! What do you mean to do?

CAROLINE

I? Nothing.

SUSAN

Carrie, come back with me. We'll leave our cards; and we'll have done our duty.

CAROLINE

Go if you like.

SUSAN

[*With a nervous whimper.*]

I won't desert you, Carrie!

CAROLINE

[*Rising.*]

Oh, then shut up!

SUSAN

Don't be rash, dear, she may know more than you think.

CAROLINE

In big things I do nothing underhand.

[*There is heard a fearful shaking of the window.*]

SUSAN

What's that!!

CAROLINE

I'll see.

[*She goes toward window rear, pulls up the blind. The person outside on the fire-escape flings up the window and scrambles into the room.*]

SUSAN

[*Tearfully.*]

[*During* CAROLINE'S *movement.*]

I don't know what we're doing here anyway!

CAROLINE

[*Seeing* MURTHA.]

The gorilla!

SUSAN

[*Frightened.*]

Carrie, this is the way out!

[MURTHA *has scrambled into the room talking incoherently to herself. She looks rather damaged, and is carrying her apron and purse in her hand. Her hair is tousled and her eye is red.*]

MURTHA

[*Recognizing* CAROLINE.]

Ah, fer th' love o' God, Mrs. Knowllez, is it you! D'ye see me oye!

[*Pointing to it.*]

That's phwat ye git whin ye come interferin' between a hushband and a woife! Shure, it wuz *her* that guv me that.

[*Laughing.*]

Hah, there wuz wigs on th' green! I licked him wance before, and Mrs. Doolan she knows it, moind ye; and whin I wuz trou' wid him, a dog wouldn't ha' lapped his blood!

[CAROLINE *and* SUSAN *have tried in vain to retreat before* MURTHA'S *stream of hysterical verbiage.*]

SUSAN

[*Completely appalled.*]

Yes, that's all very interesting . . .!

[*Retreats around table.*]

MURTHA

Now doan't ye moind me. Shure O'im only talkin' to mesilf, and Oi couldn't foind a bigger fool to talk to.

[*She opens a purse she still carries in her hand, sees her money.*]

Ah, that's all roight.

[*She puts purse down on the table.* CAROLINE *and* SUSAN *are chasséing toward the door, which is suddenly opened and* HILDEGARDE *is heard talking to some one at the entrance.*]

HILDEGARDE

[*Calling in.*]

Mrs. Murtha, go bathe that eye in cold water.

MURTHA

[*Subdued immediately.*]

Yis, ma'm.

[*She goes to the sink and does so.*]

HILDEGARDE

[*Continuing to some one outside.*]

No, Doolan; if you're sobered up at four o'clock, come to my office. The ejection officer will be there.

[*She closes the door sharply as she enters, then suddenly sees* CAROLINE *and* SUSAN. *She continues with complete composure.*]

Oh!

[*Shakes hands with* CAROLINE.]

I'm sorry I wasn't here to receive you.

[*Shakes hands with* SUSAN.]

I hope you'll forgive me. There's been an unfortunate difficulty with a couple of our tenants. Excuse me!

CAROLINE

Certainly.

[HILDEGARDE *exits into her room.*]

[CAROLINE *and* SUSAN *look at each other while the noise of running water is heard at the sink, where* MURTHA *is bathing her eye.* SUSAN *is frightened.* CAROLINE *is enjoying her usual parasitic amusement.*]

SUSAN

What do you think, Carrie?

CAROLINE

The worse it is, the better I like it.

[HILDEGARDE *immediately re-enters with a small bottle and some lint, which she puts down on the table.*]

HILDEGARDE

[*To* CAROLINE *and* SUSAN.]

Won't you lay off your wraps in Larrie's room?

[*Pointing left.*]

[SUSAN *passes and enters the room at left.*]

[*Continues.*]

I'm sure there's more excitement than real injury.

[CAROLINE *goes toward room.* HILDEGARDE *takes a bowl from plate rack and moves to* MURTHA.]

CAROLINE

[*To* SUSAN *whose train is still visible showing the smallness of the room.*]

Susan, go in.

SUSAN

[*Excitedly.*]

I can't walk through the wall, my dear.

[*The train is however snatched in, and* CAROLINE *enters, closing the door behind her.*]

MURTHA

Oh, me oye — me oye!

HILDEGARDE

[*To* MURTHA.]

Now quick, let me look at that eye.

MURTHA

Shure Oi will, me dear!

HILDEGARDE

Bathe it with this stuff. Here, use this too.

[*Going to table to get the lint pad, she sees* MURTHA'S *purse.*]

Oh, you've found your purse. Where was it?

MURTHA

[*Guiltily.*]

I must ha' dhropped it runnin' down.

HILDEGARDE

You see you were wrong to accuse Mrs. Doolan. That only made more trouble.

MURTHA

[*Cannily.*]

It wuz th' loocky thing thim Polacks didn't know 'twas loyin' jusht outside their window.

[LAWRENCE *enters from the hall door.*]

LAWRENCE

[*To* HILDEGARDE.]

Where *have* you been?

MURTHA

[*Groaning.*]

Oh, Mother! Me oye . . . me oye. . . .

[*She sits wretchedly at the left.*]

LAWRENCE

What's the matter!

MURTHA

[*In a loud regretful tone.*]

If I had only hit him whin he thripped!!

HILDEGARDE

There's been trouble with the Doolans.

LAWRENCE

In here?

HILDEGARDE

No. And everything is all right now.

LAWRENCE

Yes, but where are the ladies?

HILDEGARDE

[*Trying to quiet him by her tone.*]

In your room, laying off their wraps.

[*During the above,* MURTHA *has been fighting over the battle in pantomime, while bathing her eye, and mumbling to herself.*]

LAWRENCE

Did you get anybody else to help you?

HILDEGARDE

[*Barely holding her nerves.*]

I've been quelling a riot!

LAWRENCE

[*Pointing to* MURTHA.]

What are you going to do with her?

HILDEGARDE

Go to Mrs. Pannakin's, and see if *she* won't serve the dinner herself.

LAWRENCE

I was just there looking for *you!* I asked her then. . . .

HILDEGARDE

Well . . .?

LAWRENCE

[*Throwing up his hands and speaking to the ceiling.*]

She can't come! She isn't dressed! And dinner's ready!!

HILDEGARDE

[*To* MURTHA.]

Go to Mrs. Pannakin's, smooth your hair, borrow an apron and bring in the dinner.

MURTHA

[*Rising.*]

Oh, yis, ma'm.

[*With a savage gesture.*]

The durrty A.P.A.!

[*She crosses to the hall door muttering.*]

Oh, Lord, I'm as blind as Doolan's goat! I'll nivir see out o' that oye again. . . . To hit me whin Oi wasn't lookin'. . . .

[*She exits.*]

LAWRENCE

Good Lord!

[*He swings around the room in an ecstasy of exasperation.*]

HILDEGARDE

[*Going to him.*]

Larrie, no matter what happens, don't be betrayed into any rudeness to me before Mrs. Knollys.

[*The door left opens and* SUSAN *enters.*]

HILDEGARDE

The excitement has subsided. Won't you sit here?

[*She fixes a chair at her right.*]

[SUSAN *sits with her back to the door.* CAROLINE *enters.*]

[*Continuing.*]

And, Mrs. Knollys, won't you sit there?

[*She motions* CAROLINE *to the chair at* LAWRENCE'S *right. He helps her. She faces the door.* HILDEGARDE *faces the audience.* LAWRENCE *has his back to the audience. Note: the* LADIES *have just removed their wraps.* CAROLINE *has not taken off her gloves.*]

Don't mind my jumping up.

[*She gets bread and butter from the wash-tubs.*]

How is Mr. Knollys?

CAROLINE

Well, thank you, the last I heard.

HILDEGARDE

[*Puts the bread on table and helps them to butter.*]

[*To* CAROLINE.]

Let me help you. We hear the Homestead Mills are going to begin work again. I'm glad. Sugar?

CAROLINE

[*Waving a "no."*]

And the percentage on investments lowered again.

[*They all, except* CAROLINE, *eat grape-fruit.*]

SUSAN

[*Changing the conversation.*]

Mrs. Sanbury, have you any nerves left?

HILDEGARDE

This is by no means a typical day.

CAROLINE

No?

HILDEGARDE

Many of the workmen living here are idle. Unfortunately, they drink.

CAROLINE

If that is how they spend their leisure, why agitate for shorter hours and bigger pay?

SUSAN

[*Vigorously.*]

What good bread!

HILDEGARDE

Many laboring people drink because they have to work, and —

CAROLINE

[*Interrupting sarcastically.*]

Precisely, and they don't like it. I agree with you so far.

HILDEGARDE

Perhaps. But oftener they get the habit of drink because they haven't decent food.

LAWRENCE

[*Rising.*]

That being the case, ladies, I propose we fortify ourselves against the possible vagaries of our co-operative cook. · ·

[*He goes to tubs and takes out bottles.*]

SUSAN

[*Looking.*]

Your what?

HILDEGARDE

[*To* SUSAN.]

Perhaps Larrie has told you, this is a co-operative dining-room. Several of the people living here chip in to pay the rent.

LAWRENCE

[*To* CAROLINE.]

A little Scotch?

[*She refuses it. He helps* SUSAN.]

CAROLINE

[*To* HILDEGARDE.]

A sort of socialistic mess.

SUSAN

[*Incredulously.*]

But you're not Socialists, are you?

[*She drops her bread and knife.*]

HILDEGARDE

Not all of us.

SUSAN

[*Reassured and beginning to eat again.*]

Oh, that's better.

HILDEGARDE

But then we've got an Anarchist or two among us.

SUSAN

[*Anxiously, pausing in a mouthful.*]

Oh!

HILDEGARDE

[*Continuing.*]

All interested in improving conditions.

SUSAN

[*Approving charitably.*]

Ah.

[*She resumes eating.*]

LAWRENCE

[*Rising.*]

Psch!

[*Mysteriously.*]

It's coming!

[SUSAN *is apprehensive, as he goes to the hall door and opens it.*]

I've got a long distance nose! The soup!!

[*He returns to his chair as* MURTHA *enters carrying four soup-bowls on a very presentable tray. She never takes her eyes from* HILDEGARDE. MURTHA *is very neat and important.* HILDEGARDE *motions her to serve her first.* MURTHA *does so.*]

SUSAN

[*Seeing* MURTHA.]

Oh, she's all right again. I'm glad.

HILDEGARDE

[*To* MURTHA.]

Then serve Mrs. Knollys.

CAROLINE

[*Waving a gloved hand.*]

I never eat soup.

[MURTHA *goes to* SUSAN *and helps her, then* LAWRENCE. *She stands awkwardly for a moment, but very quietly.*]

HILDEGARDE

[*To* MURTHA.]

You can come back in a moment and clear off the bowls.

MURTHA

Yis, ma'm.

HILDEGARDE

Leave the door ajar.

[MURTHA *is about to exit, carrying the tray with* CAROLINE'S *bowl of soup on it, when she is passed in the door by* MICHAEL KRELLIN. KRELLIN *is a Russian by birth, but speaks English with a scrupulous, scholarly exactness, though with a slightly foreign accent. Physically, he is of medium height, lithe and slender in figure, rapid and exact in his movements. His dress is clean but careless. Everything about him betokens a fearless definiteness of mind. He has a shock of curly hair. His face is pale, his eyes are very keen; and when he looks at a person, he is likely to peer a little closer into their faces than the usual man. His speech is fluent and incisive. He is mentally a combination of the political dreamer and the practical meliorist, who has saved his optimism by fighting for the next reform at his hand. His manner is above all things humorous and*

easy, with a sort of detached impersonal impertinence. He has the assurance of the platform orator.]

MURTHA

[*Meeting him at the door.*]

Good marnin', Mishter Krellin.

KRELLIN

Good morning. Eh? Wait!

[*Stops* MURTHA *and peers into the tray.*]

LAWRENCE

[*To* CAROLINE.]

There's our Anarchist.

[HILDEGARDE *rises.*]

KRELLIN

[*Continuing to* MURTHA.]

Here . . . Hello — Hello! I'll *take* that soup.

[*He has already deftly lifted it from the tray.*]

MURTHA

Doan't let yer modesty wrong you.

[*She exits.*]

KRELLIN

[*Joyously.*]

Hildegarde, Hildegarde! I've news for you! Good news!

[*He goes immediately to the cupboard, puts down his soup-bowl deftly, pulls out a drawer, finds his napkin with a cheap ring on it, picks out a knife, fork and spoon, puts the napkin in his mouth, takes the bowl, with knife, fork and spoon in one hand, then picks up a chair with his remaining hand and advances toward the table.*]

HILDEGARDE

[*Hesitatingly.*]

Yes, Michael . . .

KRELLIN

[*During the above business.*]

Just wait. I'm as hungry as a wolf. All night at the office.

HILDEGARDE

You must be tired, Michael.

KRELLIN

[*His voice is merry, but his body is relaxed.*]

Not very.

[*He puts down his chair between* SUSAN'S *and* HILDEGARDE'S, *and places his eating paraphernalia on the table.* SUSAN *draws away, as he sits down.* CAROLINE *is imperturbed.* LAWRENCE *is annoyed.*]

KRELLIN

[*Peering near-sightedly at* SUSAN.]

Oh, you're having a party. I didn't see.

[*Rising.*]

Pardon, I am very near-sighted; and I have broken my glasses.

[*About to withdraw.*]

I'll step in later.

HILDEGARDE

Wait, Michael.

[*To* CAROLINE *and* SUSAN.]

Mr. Krellin is one of our friends.

KRELLIN

Yes, yes. I only wanted to ask; did you finish your article?

HILDEGARDE

Yes. It's gone. What's the news?

KRELLIN

You'll have to write a special. Despatches from the South tell of the final settlement by arbitration with the Homestead Mills. Another victory!

[*He shakes* HILDEGARDE'S *hands enthusiastically.*]

HILDEGARDE

Splendid, but —

[*Turns toward* CAROLINE.]

KRELLIN

[*Continuing.*]

A ten hour day, and a dollar ninety cents!

LAWRENCE

The Homestead Mills! those are . . .

[*Turns to* CAROLINE.]

CAROLINE

Yes, I'm interested.

HILDEGARDE

My friend is one of the reporters on the "ECHO." He's just had news. May I present him?

CAROLINE

And which way has the strike been settled?

KRELLIN

[*Coming toward her.*]

You will be glad to hear in favor of the shorter hour and the living wage. Another milestone passed!

HILDEGARDE

Mrs. Knollys, this is Mr. Krellin. A member of our co-operative club. We don't usually have the pleasure of seeing him till dinner time.

KRELLIN

[*Has leaned toward* CAROLINE.]

Mrs. Knollys . . . *Knollys?*

[*Peers at her, then at* HILDEGARDE, *then again at* CAROLINE.]

I am delighted to find *you* here.

[*Laughs softly.*]

God is a great dramatist!

CAROLINE

Why?

KRELLIN

I've seen you before, Madame; and I've heard of your husband.

HILDEGARDE

[*Quickly.*]

And this is Miss Ambie.

KRELLIN

[*Bowing.*]

Ah, yes . . . Miss Ah . . .

[*He goes toward her.*]

SUSAN

[*Frightened.*]

How do you do! . . .

[KRELLIN *sits between* HILDEGARDE *and* SUSAN. *Pause.*]

KRELLIN

[*Partially rising with his knife in hand and peering.*]

Is that the butter?

[*He takes some and puts it on bread. To* CAROLINE, *as he settles back in his chair.*]

Mrs. Knollys, I put you on your guard. Before you know it, Hildegarde will persuade you to invest in tenements and make you a five per cent. philanthropist.

LAWRENCE

[*Decidedly.*]

No, she won't! She —

KRELLIN

[*Interrupting.*]

Wait! She will induce you to put up better dwellings for the poor; so they can live a little more decently on their miserable wages. You will feel charitable toward them, because they will give you a steady five per cent.; and the workingmen will be made more contented with conditions, that otherwise they might be encouraged to radically change.

SUSAN

[*Horrified.*]

But don't you believe in charity?

KRELLIN

[*Throwing up his hands.*]

Ah, I see! Another sentimentalist. I surrender!

SUSAN

I'm no such thing!

KRELLIN

[*Gracefully looking at* SUSAN *and* CAROLINE.]

But neither of you is old enough to be the real conservative.

CAROLINE

[*Smiling.*]

You're a radical?

KRELLIN

I am a social physician, whose prescriptions nobody respects, because I do not believe in wasting time disguising or trying to cure *symptoms. Poverty is the real disease.*

CAROLINE

Other people have a name for your kind of man.

KRELLIN

They call us lots of names. Which one?

CAROLINE

They call you "muck-rakers."

KRELLIN

[*Good humoredly.*]

Oh, that never offends me. To make all beautiful things grow, there must be some one to stir up . . . ah . . . unappetizing things about the roots. We do that.

[*Pointing to* CAROLINE.]

Unfortunately, however, it is the "other" people that wear the flowers. So!

[*He eats his soup.*]

LAWRENCE

You mustn't take him seriously, Mrs. Knollys.

KRELLIN

Never listen to the artists. *They* must take nothing seriously; else they could find very little beauty in anything. They are spiritual toy-makers and seducers. They gather the flowers and forget the roots. At least don't take them seriously when they *speak*. Admire them when they *do;* because they are permitted to do, and don't know *how* to speak. Listen to *us* when *we* speak; because the government will allow us no other liberty.

[*Eats.*]

LAWRENCE

Nonsense, Michael.

KRELLIN

[*Appealing to* CAROLINE.]

You see, that is my great misfortune. My friends never know when I am in earnest. What else is there to eat?

[*At this moment* MURTHA *appears with a tray on which are chops and vegetables.*]

HILDEGARDE

[*To* MURTHA.]

Take these things off before you serve the chops.

[MURTHA, *without a word, puts the tray on the cupboard, and deftly removes the empty soup-bowls.*]

KRELLIN

[*To* HILDEGARDE.]

Emmy will be late.

[MURTHA *during the next speeches serves chops.*]

CAROLINE

[*Resuming.*]

Do you take yourself seriously, Mr. Krellin?

KRELLIN

[*With a quick glance.*]

That means *you* don't. But I did once. That's why I left Russia.

HILDEGARDE

Mr. Krellin wrote a book for the Radical movement, and the government didn't like it.

CAROLINE

Wise government.

[*Henceforward* LAWRENCE *and* CAROLINE *form a party against* HILDEGARDE *and* KRELLIN.]

KRELLIN

Yes, my friends, the enemy, were making Russia too hot for me; and Siberia has always been too cold; and —

CAROLINE

[*Interrupting.*]

So you decided to make trouble over here.

[SUSAN *has got an eating devil and is despatching food.*]

KRELLIN

Precisely.

CAROLINE

And in that work, do you take *other* people seriously?

KRELLIN

Sometimes. You see, I am neither an artist [*Bowing to* LAWRENCE] nor a sentimentalist [*Bowing to* SUSAN].

SUSAN

[*Putting down her knife and fork.*]

Now he means me again, Carrie!

CAROLINE

[*To* KRELLIN.]

Then you and I might understand each other.

KRELLIN

Ah,— you mustn't ask me to take *you* seriously, Mrs. Knollys; that would be too much to ask.

CAROLINE

Why?

KRELLIN

You see, I know you. You're a spoiled American woman; which means you take neither our government nor yourself seriously. I don't blame you; neither do I. In other words, *we* have a sense of humor. And then you are a *Saxon* woman; which means to a Russian, that you have elevated hypocrisy until it takes rank with a virtue. Otherwise you could never do as you do.

[*He eats.*]

LAWRENCE

[*Growing nervous.*]

For heaven's sake, stop him!

HILDEGARDE

Please, Michael, eat.

LAWRENCE

[*To* CAROLINE.]

He's our interminable talker.

HILDEGARDE

[*Laughing a little nervously and speaking to* CAROLINE.]

People say anything they think here.

KRELLIN

[*In the midst of a mouthful.*]

Yes, *when* they think!

[*Then to* SUSAN.]

When they think!

HILDEGARDE

But we try to argue about *principles*, not persons.

CAROLINE

But I'm not interested in principles.

KRELLIN

[*To* CAROLINE.]

Right you are! Only involve people in *principles*, and you keep them harmless.

CAROLINE

[*To* KRELLIN.]

But do go on. You said you saw me once before.

KRELLIN

Yes. I was detailed at the dock when you arrived.

CAROLINE

[*Not so pleasantly.*]

Oh.

[SUSAN *puts down her knife and fork again.*]

KRELLIN

[*Continuing.*]

And a dear, a very dear friend persuaded me to lose fifteen dollars on your account.

CAROLINE

That was a very *dear* friend, indeed.

KRELLIN

Ah, yes, I had a beautiful article written, which for *her* sake, I was weak enough to drop . . . an article about the humor and hypocrisy of the American woman,— with special reference to yourself, Mrs. Knollys . . .

[LAWRENCE *is fearful, pushes back his chair.* CAROLINE *has waved aside the chop and peas that* MURTHA *has offered her.*]

[*To* MURTHA.]

Bring that to me. I've had no breakfast.

[*During the next speeches he has the business of taking* CAROLINE'S *chop, etc.*]

Shall I continue?

LAWRENCE

[*Decidedly.*]

No!

CAROLINE

By all means.

KRELLIN

[*To the others.*]

You see, she already treats me as an artist. I amuse her.

CAROLINE

Immensely.

KRELLIN

That's why I permit myself to speak. Well, to resume: strange to say, I wrote that the people whose fortunes have been made in industries protected by the government are always the very ones most eager to evade the customs imposed by that government to *protect* their industries.

SUSAN

[*Fearfully.*]

Carrie!

KRELLIN

[*Impatiently.*]

Miss Nambie — Miss Pambie — Miss . . .

SUSAN

Ambie is my name.

KRELLIN

Pardon, quite so. I do not include you; because on that day you personally *lost* your sense of humor.

[*To* CAROLINE.]

Your money is made in protected tin plate. Your husband's in protected woollen mills.

[*Laughs.*]

You see, you have a sense of humor and a genius for hypocrisy.

[*Seriously.*]

You don't *respect* a government that will let your factories work the *poor* the way they do. Neither do I. And so you refuse to pay the customs to support that government. No more do I!

LAWRENCE

Michael!

KRELLIN

[*Continuing unperturbed.*]

I admire you! Your personal discernment and your sense of humor were almost worth six thousand dollars to you. I admire you personally — fifteen

dollars' worth; and that's a great deal for a man who is saving up in order to get married.

CAROLINE

[*Quietly leading him on.*]

Oh, you still believe in marriage. That's interesting.

KRELLIN

You mean, as soon as we are *inconsistent* we are interesting.

[*Wisely.*]

You believe in conventions that you do not observe; *I* for a time observe conventions in which I do not believe.

SUSAN

[*Horrified.*]

Don't you believe in marriage?

KRELLIN

[*Bowing to her.*]

Oh, yes, as all the *un*married people do.

SUSAN

I'm sure I don't know what you mean, but it makes me very uncomfortable.

LAWRENCE

[*Laughing.*]

Gag him!

HILDEGARDE

I'll mix the salad.

[*She gets the salad bowl.* MURTHA *helps her.*]

CAROLINE

Then you believe in *women* too?

KRELLIN

Boundlessly. And in every capacity of citizenship.

[SUSAN *pushes back her chair with an exclamation of disgust.* KRELLIN *continues to* CAROLINE.]

I believe especially in *one*, the one I'm going to marry. I believe in eugenics and endowed maternity — in everything that makes for a superior humanity.

[*To* SUSAN.]

I believe that by our foolish laws we can sometimes save people from doing what they'd like to *do*.

[*To* CAROLINE.]

I should like to save people from being what they *are*. I believe — Oh — I believe that I'm a stupid fool for telling you sincerely all that I do believe in — and —

[*To* HILDEGARDE.]

Don't put too much vinegar in the dressing.

SUSAN

[*Outraged.*]

I've listened long enough!

CAROLINE

Why, Susan! What's broke loose in you?

SUSAN

I'm bound to protest!

KRELLIN

Ah, then there's hope for you.

SUSAN

[*Scathingly.*]

Oh, I'm not clever! but I think your ideas are perfectly ridiculous and detestable — all of them!

KRELLIN

Thank you. I would have doubt of them if you thought otherwise.

SUSAN

[*Continuing.*]

And as for women as citizens — women voting and doing the work of men . . . Well, it's bad enough now as it is, when they happen to hold office under the government . . .

KRELLIN

[*Amused.*]

I remember. You had difficulty.

SUSAN

[*Unheeding his interruption.*]

Yes, we had an experience at the customs!

CAROLINE

[*Warningly.*]

Susan!

SUSAN

[*Impetuously.*]

There was a hussy there when we arrived . . . Of all the insolence in office . . . Hah! If I had *my* way . . .

[*Stops breathlessly.*]

KRELLIN

You *didn't* have your way. That was the trouble, wasn't it?

SUSAN

Well, I'd like to meet her some time face to face — That's all; when she didn't have her little badge upon her; and without the authority of the government behind her — I'd . . .

KRELLIN

Yes — yes. Excuse me.

[*The door to the hall has opened and* EMILY MADDEN *appears.* KRELLIN *has risen alertly.*]

SUSAN

[*Bewildered.*]

What's the matter?

[*She continues to talk to* CAROLINE.]

KRELLIN

[*At the door with* EMILY.]

Ah, Emmy, you're late.

[*He starts to bring her down. She resists a little, seeing strangers present.*]

CAROLINE

[*Seeing* EMILY.]

Susan, you're a fool!

SUSAN

[*Seated with her back to the door, doesn't see* EMILY. *She continues to* CAROLINE, *mournfully:*]

I had no right to drink that whisky. It always makes me silly.

[*She suddenly turns, following* CAROLINE'S *glance, and exclaims, terrified:*]

There she is!! Don't *you* see her?

[*Crumpled.*]

Oh, Carrie, it's gone to my head!!

[*She makes a mad clutch at her head.*]

CAROLINE

Keep quiet!

LAWRENCE

[*To* CAROLINE.]

I'm so sorry.

[*Then savagely to* HILDEGARDE.]

Now, you see! . . .

[*He becomes incoherent and swings up rear, sees* MURTHA, *stops short and goes to window.*]

KRELLIN

[*Bringing* EMILY *down.*]

Emily, there is a lady here, who has just expressed a great desire to meet you.

EMILY

[*Advancing a step.*]

Oh, then, I'd be deligh—

[*She stops and recoils as she recognizes* CAROLINE.]

SUSAN

[*Waving her hands.*]

I've had quite enough! I've had quite enough!!

[*She rises as if to go.*]

KRELLIN

[*Gallantly.*]

Mrs. Knollys, Miss Madden is the reason for my belief in marriage.

CAROLINE

[*Amused and pausing.*]

Oh! That is remarkable.

[*She suddenly realizes that a weapon has been placed in her hands; she immediately becomes calm.* EMILY *is in silent desperation.*]

KRELLIN

[*Proudly.*]

It was due to *her* persuasion that the article I wrote about you was never published in the papers.

CAROLINE

[*To* EMILY.]

I am glad of this opportunity to thank Miss Madden for that, and [*Significantly*] for many other favors.

EMILY

[*Uncertainly.*]

Oh, I am sure . . . I . . .

KRELLIN

[*To* EMILY.]

I needed you, my dear, to save me from Miss Ambie and defend the government. Miss Ambie agrees with you about the government. [*To* SUSAN.] No?

SUSAN

[*Vehemently.*]

I don't!

KRELLIN

[*To* EMILY.]

She does not! Another convert!

[*Gesture of amusement.*]

While Mrs. Knollys and I maintain the government is ridiculous. [*To* CAROLINE.] No?

[*Suddenly remembering.*]

I'll get a chair.

[*He looks for one, but there are no more.*]

CAROLINE

[*To* KRELLIN.]

Don't bother, please. Miss Madden can occupy my place.

EMILY

Oh, no!

HILDEGARDE

[*To* CAROLINE.]

Please don't disturb yourself.

[*To* LAWRENCE.]

Larrie, get a chair from your room.

[LAWRENCE *immediately exits left.*]

CAROLINE

It won't be a new experience for Miss Madden. She has already *occupied my place* before this, many times; and for a long time, I have been accustomed to yield to her.

KRELLIN

[*Perplexed.*]

Is that so! How?

EMILY

[*In terror.*]

Oh, Michael, why did I come here!!

KRELLIN

What's the matter, Emmy?

CAROLINE

[*To* EMILY.]

Have no fear, Miss Madden. Your intended husband believes in women "boundlessly," and "in every capacity." He has a sense of humor and admires hypocrites. He will be consistent to his views; but I am sure he will allow me to be equally consistent with mine.

KRELLIN

Carte blanche!

[*Seeing* LAWRENCE *re-enter with the chair.*]

Here we are. Now we can listen.

CAROLINE

I have no principles, but I have some prejudices. And either Miss Madden or I must leave the room.

SUSAN

Oh, Carrie!

KRELLIN

What do you mean! That isn't argument. That is evasion!

LAWRENCE

[*Quickly.*]

Emily and Michael, you've said about enough! Now please go!

[*He bangs down the chair.*]

HILDEGARDE

[*To* LAWRENCE.]

By no means. Mrs. Knollys will be good enough to explain herself.

KRELLIN

What is your reason, Mrs. Knollys?

CAROLINE

[*Charmingly.*]

Since you insist, it is simply because I refuse to sit at the same table with my husband's ***mistress.***

KRELLIN

[*Dawning.*]

Ha!!

HILDEGARDE

[*Simultaneously.*]

Oh!

KRELLIN

[*Fiercely.*]

That's a lie! A black, malicious lie!!

CAROLINE

Oh, no!

KRELLIN

[*Continuing.*]

She doesn't even *know* your husband!

CAROLINE

[*Confidently taunting.*]

Ask her!

KRELLIN

Madame, I am not here to insult her myself; but to defend her against *your attempt* to do so.

CAROLINE

Ask her, and you will learn it was for my *husband's* sake that your article was suppressed. But he, no doubt, has *paid* Miss Madden for any loss *you* may have suffered. Come, Susan.

[*To* HILDEGARDE.]

I've had a most delightful luncheon. My wrap, Lawrence.

[*He exits left.*]

KRELLIN

[*Quietly aggressive.*]

Mrs. Knollys, of course you cannot go until I have relieved your mind from any misapprehensions you may have concerning your husband.

CAROLINE

But unfortunately I seem to affect Miss Madden disagreeably.

[LAWRENCE *re-enters with wraps.*]

MURTHA

[*Suddenly coming up from rear.*]

Fer th' love o' Gawd, th' poor gurrl's goin' t' faint!!

[*She takes* EMILY *in her arms.*]

EMILY

[*Weakly.*]

Take me home, Michael. . . . Oh . . .!

MURTHA

Now there, there, there, dearie, doan't ye moind. . . .

KRELLIN

[*To* MARTHA.]

Yes, take Miss Madden home!!

EMILY

No! Not without you, Michael!!

SUSAN

[*Terrified.*]

Carrie, Carrie! Come with me! Come home!! I'm sorry we ever came! These awful people!!

[*Gets into her wrap.*]

LAWRENCE

Come, Mrs. Knollys.

[*Then to* KRELLIN *and* EMILY.]

If *they* haven't sense enough to go!

KRELLIN

[*Fiercely to* CAROLINE.]

You *cannot* go!

LAWRENCE

[*To* KRELLIN.]

What do you mean?

KRELLIN

I have something to say to Mrs. Knollys!

SUSAN

[*As he comes forward.*]

Carrie, if you don't come, I . . .

[*Weeps in fright.*]

God knows what they will do!

HILDEGARDE

[*Beseechingly.*]

Michael, go with Emily!

KRELLIN

[*Shaking his mane.*]

Mrs. Knollys has permitted herself to utter a filthy, vicious lie! And I —

HILDEGARDE

[*Going to him.*]

But this is not the time to —

KRELLIN

[*In fury.*]

A filthy LIE!!

LAWRENCE

[*To* KRELLIN.]

See here, you can't use that kind of language to my friend!

KRELLIN

[*Savagely to* LAWRENCE.]

Your *friend!* You little lap-dog! I want nothing from you! Just look to yourself!!

[*He flings* LAWRENCE *aside.*]

HILDEGARDE

[*Imploringly.*]

Michael, go with Emily. She *needs* you.

[*She turns him around, and he sees* EMILY *being helped to the door by* MURTHA.]

EMILY

[*As she leaves with* MURTHA.]

Michael. . . . Michael. . . .

KRELLIN

[*With suppressed vehemence.*]

Mrs. Knollys, I shall give myself the pleasure of continuing this conversation in the presence of your husband.

[*He bows and exits, after* MURTHA *and* EMILY.]

SUSAN

[*Incoherently.*]

Carrie, here are your things! Here! Of all the frightful experiences!

[*Spinning around.*]

Where's my glove? You must get out of this!!

HILDEGARDE

Mrs. Knollys, *I* must have a word with you.

SUSAN

[*Dizzily.*]

Now *she's* going to begin! Why did we ever . . .?

LAWRENCE

[*Angrily.*]

Hildegarde, don't you think you'd better drop it?

HILDEGARDE

[*Meaningly.*]

It isn't only in reference to *Miss Madden* that I wish to speak.

SUSAN

[*Hysterically.*]

I knew it, Carrie!

[*To* HILDEGARDE.]

But you're wrong! No matter what you think. . . . People have such vile minds!

[*Specifically.*]

I was with Mrs. Knollys all the time, except once when I took sick. . . . Your husband knows it — and so does Mr. Knollys. . . .

LAWRENCE

What are you talking about?

SUSAN

[*Continuing.*]

And if her kindness is to be misinterpreted — then —

LAWRENCE

[*Angrily.*]

Say, Miss Ambie, what's on your mind?

CAROLINE

[*To* LAWRENCE.]

Psch!

SUSAN

[*Collapsing.*]

Oh, everybody's crazy!

LAWRENCE

[*Disgusted.*]

You're right there.

[*He turns helplessly.*]

Hildegarde, I hope that. . . . Oh, what's the use!

CAROLINE

[*Abruptly.*]

Quite so, Lawrence; get Susan home.

[SUSAN *has got rapidly to the hall door.*]

LAWRENCE

But, Hildegarde, I —

CAROLINE

Please go. I wish to talk with your wife.

[LAWRENCE *takes his hat.*]

Send the motor back for me immediately.

[*He crosses to the door. There is a look full of crowded meaning between* HILDEGARDE *and* CAROLINE; *then* CAROLINE *continues to* LAWRENCE.]

Oh, and remember, you have engagements for this afternoon.

[LAWRENCE *exits with* SUSAN. HILDEGARDE *closes the door after him. There is a pause of sizing up between the two women.*]

[*Amused.*]

You're not going to lock me in; I hope.

HILDEGARDE

[*Gravely.*]

No. But after you leave this room, I want you to pass out of our lives forever.

CAROLINE

Your life? That's very simple. You have something else to say to me?

HILDEGARDE

So many things,— I hardly know where to begin.

CAROLINE

Let me help you. We'll eliminate Miss Madden.

HILDEGARDE

We will *not* eliminate Miss Madden. We have a different sense of values, you and I; but we both are *married* women. Emily is different. She has nothing but her friends, Michael and me. And we together will force you to retract.

CAROLINE

Retract the truth! What else?

HILDEGARDE

And make a full apology to her.

CAROLINE

I have never apologized in my life.

HILDEGARDE

Then you have a new experience in store for you.

[*Pause.*]

What was your purpose in coming here to-day?

CAROLINE

[*With charming frankness.*]

You know. My interest in your husband.

HILDEGARDE

And now, you think you can eliminate *me*.

CAROLINE

Why? Your husband has his own career; and you are sensible.

HILDEGARDE

It's a dangerous thing to interfere with other people's lives.

CAROLINE

Yes. We discussed that some time ago.

HILDEGARDE

You told me then that I might hinder him,— that my very work in the world might be an obstacle. Since then I've left him free. I haven't influenced him —

CAROLINE

Oh, don't make virtues of your inabilities.

HILDEGARDE

You mean?

CAROLINE

Don't boast of what you *couldn't* do. You know you couldn't keep him here. Don't say you didn't *want* to. That would be weak.

HILDEGARDE

I don't wish to speak of Lawrence. I wish to speak of you. I am told the world of art needs women of your kind. You have everything — wealth, influence, position. You hold patronage and opportunity in your hands.

CAROLINE

[*Interrupting.*]

Why don't you add: "You hold my husband too"? In other words, that you regret your bargain; and you want me to send him back to you.

HILDEGARDE

[*Scornfully.*]

Oh, no! But don't make the price for your patronage so high, that a man must sacrifice his self-respect to gain the prize you offer.

CAROLINE

[*Quietly, after a look.*]

I never dreamed that you'd be jealous; are you?

HILDEGARDE

[*Fervently.*]

Yes, I am jealous — jealous *for* him, but not *of* him!

CAROLINE

I've given him the opportunity. *He* has chosen.

HILDEGARDE

He hasn't!

CAROLINE

Then why are you so anxious?

HILDEGARDE

[*Continuing.*]

To choose, one must be independent. He isn't. He thinks he dare not choose against you. He fears to jeopardize commissions. There's where you make unscrupulous use of your advantages!

CAROLINE

[*With a smile.*]

My dear Mrs. Sanbury, I may be mistaken; but you seem bent on telling me your husband doesn't care for me. Is that what you mean?

HILDEGARDE

No.

[*Suddenly.*]

What are you trying to make me think?

CAROLINE

Think what you like. *I* make no disguises. But I marvel at you.

HILDEGARDE

At me!

CAROLINE

I thought you weren't a feminine woman. You're interested in so many things beside your husband. I've interested myself in him. If, in that interest, you think that *he* has gone beyond what you expected; why not speak to *him?*

HILDEGARDE

He's lost his senses! You've blinded him!

CAROLINE

I thought I had *opened* his eyes. You see, Love isn't blind. The trouble is, it sees too much!

[*Obliterating her with a glance.*]

It sometimes sees things that aren't there at all. It isn't *my* fault if *now* he sees things as they are. I open everybody's eyes. That's my profession.

[*Significantly.*]

I've opened *yours,* I hope. I've opened Mr. Krellin's.

[*She laughs.*]

HILDEGARDE

Yes, and tried wantonly to destroy his faith in Emily, as now you're trying to destroy my faith in Lawrence.

CAROLINE

Ah, then you *are* afraid!

HILDEGARDE

[*Uncertainly.*]

Afraid of what!

CAROLINE

You fear to lose your husband's love. Of course, you'll struggle.

HILDEGARDE

I never struggle for what is mine.

CAROLINE

Hum.

HILDEGARDE

[*Nervously.*]

I'm not afraid of Lawrence. Your insinuations don't affect me — you . . .

CAROLINE

Indeed. Then why this argument?

HILDEGARDE

[*Amazed.*]

You'd like to make me think my husband is your lover!

[*She draws a sharp breath.*]

CAROLINE

And if that were the case — What then?

[*Pause.*]

HILDEGARDE

Oh, no! You wouldn't boast of it!

CAROLINE

[*Quietly.*]

I never boast. Only the insecure do that.

HILDEGARDE

It's a lie! It's a lie!! It's a lie!!!

CAROLINE

Ask him.

HILDEGARDE

You mean you would have me ask my husband such a question?

CAROLINE

Why not?

HILDEGARDE

[*Suddenly calm, and seeing through* CAROLINE.]

Because it isn't important enough, Mrs. Knollys.

CAROLINE

You mean, your husband's fidelity isn't important to you?

HILDEGARDE

Oh, yes, but there's far more at stake. For his sake, I've stepped aside. I've given you every chance with him; because you may have helped him.

. . . I don't know. You've taken his time, his mind, his work, his energy. He has amused you, fed your vanity and gratified your sense of power over people. I've been patient. I've left him free to choose. For if a woman like you can take the rest of him from me; he isn't worth my energy to keep. I don't want even a part of him; if anything is withheld —

CAROLINE

[*With an amused sneer.*]

And what have *I* to do with your ideal of marriage?

HILDEGARDE

I don't approve of the way that you make use of the protection of your husband's name!

CAROLINE

Then you'd better see my husband.

[*She goes toward the hall door.*]

HILDEGARDE

Perhaps I shall.

CAROLINE

He'll be delighted to discuss Miss Madden. Mr. Krellin also wants to speak with him. He'll welcome you both; I'm sure.

[*Turning casually.*]

He's just back from the South. He'll be in splen-

did humor after all you've done for him in shutting up the mills. Good-by.

[*She exits in smiling good humor.*]

[HILDEGARDE *stands by the table and slowly sinks into a chair. The hum of tenement life becomes audible. A baby is heard crying; and every detail that can be developed, pointing to the barren squalor of her life is emphasized as in contrast with the elegance of* MRS. KNOLLYS'. HILDEGARDE *sits lost in thought, while the hubbub swings around her. Suddenly the telephone begins to ring.* HILDEGARDE *doesn't notice it at first. The bell continues.* HILDEGARDE *seems to come to her senses with a start. She goes to the 'phone, takes receiver and listens mechanically.*]

HILDEGARDE

Yes. . . . This is Mrs. Sanbury. . . . Who is this? . . . Oh, Miss Ambie. . . . Yes. . . . Mrs. Knollys has just left. . . .

[*Coldly.*]

I quite understand. Yes. . . . Good-by. . . .

[*Suddenly.*]

Wait! Hello!

[*Quietly.*]

Is Mr. Sanbury still there?

[MURTHA *has entered softly from the hall, and goes to clear up the table.*]

. . . Yes. . . . I should like to speak with him.

[*Pause. She speaks very tenderly.*]

Is this you, Larrie? . . . I'm sorry; but it couldn't be helped. . . . She's just left. . . . Yes. . . . Nothing has happened. . . . I'd just like to speak with you; as soon as you can get here. . . . Larrie! . . . What? . . . You can't? . . .

[*Long breath.*]

Then I'll wait for you. . . . This evening too . . .? . . . Well, listen, Larrie, you *must* come. . . . No. . . . I can't speak of it over the 'phone. . . . I must see you; and as quickly as possible. . . . But this is important too!

[*Pause.*]

No! I can't wait! . . . Do you understand, Larrie, I *won't* wait!!!

[*She claps up the receiver and crosses to her room exclaiming hysterically:* "*I* won't *wait!! I* won't *wait!!*" MURTHA *goes on quietly clearing up the dishes at the table.* HILDEGARDE *is heard pulling out drawers violently and pushing them back again.* MURTHA *shakes her head sorrowfully. She has cannily sensed the situation.* HILDEGARDE *re-enters, carrying a small satchel, which she places on a chair next to the*

table. During the following scene she packs it with a dressing gown, tooth brush, hair brush and comb, slippers, night gown, etc. Several times during the scene she exits rapidly to her room for these toilet articles, and returns, without interrupting the dialogue.]

MURTHA

[*As* HILDEGARDE *enters carrying her satchel.*]

Ye ain't goin' away; are ye?

HILDEGARDE

[*Jamming things into the grip.*]

Yes . . . yes . . .

MURTHA

[*Suddenly.*]

Ah, where's me head! I saw th' Doolans. They've got a date wid you, they say.

HILDEGARDE

[*Going to her room.*]

I don't want to see them.

MURTHA

[*Calling after* HILDEGARDE.]

Th' agent says he's goin' to throw him out.

HILDEGARDE

He deserves it.

MURTHA

Ah, but jisht a word from you. . . . Moy, th' poor woman an' th' fambly. . . .

HILDEGARDE

[*Entering and continuing her packing.*]

I can't help them.

MURTHA

Doolan wanted to come here to apologoize; but Oi told him he'd bedther not. He'd be met on th' door-shtep wid a lump av his death!

HILDEGARDE

You can tell them the ejection officer will tend to them.

[*She exits again and immediately re-appears.*]

MURTHA

Shure, it's not *you* that's talkin', dearie; and Oi can't go down there! Th' avvicer would see me oye, and know th' Doolans done it. . . . Oh, where's that shtuff? They say it's goin' blue on me. . . . An' you wouldn't have thim turned out in th' shtreet. . . .

HILDEGARDE

[*Pointing to the shelf above the sink.*]

It's over there. You'd better take it with you.

MURTHA

Thank ye.

[*Tenderly coaxing.*]

Go on now, you. Go on now, shishter. . . . Take him back and let him shtay.

HILDEGARDE

After what they've done to you; it seems queer that you . . .

MURTHA

Shure ye can't be angry wid th' min folks. . . . They're chilthren all av thim.

[*Piling up dishes.*]

Some gits crazy over the *booze,* and some gits crazy over *polyteecks* . . . and some gits crazy over *wimmin* . . . [*Picking up all the dishes*] and th' resht gits crazy over nothin' at all.

[*Coaxingly.*]

Go on now. . . . Give iviry body anither chanct. That's what I allus says.

[*Singing out.*]

Ha! Now there's moy Tim — Ha! Oi could ha' left him any toime this forty years fer what he done to me — and what he *didn't do.* . . . G'wan now, dearie, give th' man anither chanct.

[HILDEGARDE *leaves the grip.*]

Th' Lord love ye, that's roight . . . and it's th' gran' good heart ye have.

[HILDEGARDE *goes toward door of her room.* MURTHA *continues with a wise and tender canniness.*]

And . . . ah . . . ye'll not be needin' these things roight away. . . .

[*She throws the grip into her room.*]

You'd bedther shleep here fer to-night. . . .

[HILDEGARDE *has exited sobbing brokenly.* MURTHA *returns to the work of clearing up the table. She shakes her head and exclaims:*]

Shure, they're chilthren! Ivery blessed wan of thim — just chilthren.

[*The* CURTAIN *descends on the Second Act.*]

ACT III

ACT III

The scene is the same as Act II. It is about eight-thirty of the evening of the same day. The table has been cleared and everything is restored to order. The door of HILDEGARDE'S *room is open. There are no lights on the stage, but the scene is dimly lit by the glow of lights from the flats in the rear.*

After the rise of the curtain, KRELLIN *enters from the hall door, and goes immediately to the telephone on the typewriting desk.*

KRELLIN

[*With the 'phone.*]

Hello — give me seven-one-one Plaza — yes, if you please. No, seven-*one*-one.

[*Enter* LAWRENCE *from the hall, flinging the door back.*]

KRELLIN

Say, be quiet, will you?

LAWRENCE

[*Nervously.*]

Oh, that you, Krellin? Where's Hildegarde?

[*He turns on a light over the table.*]

KRELLIN

Psch!

[*To 'phone.*]

Hello, seven-one-one Plaza? Yes. Mr. Krellin of the "NEW YORK ECHO" would like to speak with Mr. Knollys.

LAWRENCE

[*Startled.*]

See here, Krellin, you'd better drop it.

KRELLIN

[*To 'phone.*]

Then I'll ring up again — yes, later.

[*As soon as* LAWRENCE *has gathered that* HUBERT *is out, he makes a gesture of relief and flings into* HILDEGARDE'S *room. He finds her bag and immediately re-enters carrying it.* KRELLIN, *in the interim, has hung up the receiver.*]

LAWRENCE

What does this mean? Where is she?

[*He drops the bag and goes uncertainly toward his room at the left, and opens the door.*]

KRELLIN

Have you been drinking?

LAWRENCE

[*Fiercely.*]

That's my business!

KRELLIN

H'm! Have you any other?

LAWRENCE

[*Coming towards him.*]

I want to know where my wife is; and I want to know why you're telephoning my friends!

KRELLIN

Because I won't let your friends treat my Emmy the way you let them treat your wife.

LAWRENCE

Don't you interfere between Hildegarde and me! Because, if you do, by God, I'll —

KRELLIN

I don't mix in with you. I have my own score to settle with Mr. Knollys and his wife.

LAWRENCE

[*Seriously.*]

Krellin, I advise you to leave *Mr.* Knollys out of it.

KRELLIN

Oh, you are afraid, eh?

LAWRENCE

It isn't me — it's —

[*He hesitates.*]

KRELLIN

[*Violently.*]

So! You too!! That woman has made you believe that Emmy —

[*He goes toward* LAWRENCE *angrily, but stops and laughs.*]

I don't wonder Mrs. Knollys thinks all women are like she is!

LAWRENCE

[*Violently.*]

You —!

KRELLIN

[*Quietly.*]

All the more am I determined now.

LAWRENCE

[*At his wits' end.*]

There'll be an awful mix-up! I don't know what to do!

[*Sits down blankly.*]

KRELLIN

Don't think that I don't know why you're afraid of Mr. Knollys. It isn't business — it isn't Emmy — it's *you.*

[*Scathingly.*]

I am ashamed of you! You'd let this lie rest on my Emmy's shoulders, rather than have the truth revealed about yourself. Of course you don't want the truth to come out. But you see, *I'm* different. I don't fear the truth. And if your conduct with Mrs. Knollys cannot stand her husband's or your wife's investigation, I am sorry. That is all.

LAWRENCE

Get that idea out of your head! I don't fear the truth. It's Hildegarde I'm thinking of, and only Hildegarde.

KRELLIN

[*Scornfully.*]

You've thought so much of her these last four months, since —

LAWRENCE

I have. We're down to rock-bottom, Krellin. We're full of debts — even my life-insurance is gone. I've given up my job. We've pawned everything that we could raise a cent on; and Hildegarde's stood by me. That's why you can't go on and spoil things now, by dragging Mr. Knollys in.

[KRELLIN *laughs scornfully.*]

I know it looks as if I had neglected Hildegarde; but *she* understands. I've had to hold on to this one chance, tooth and toe-nail.

[*Desperately.*]

I won't let anything interfere with it! Not you, nor Hildegarde — nor Emily — nor —

KRELLIN

[*Interrupting.*]

Is that so! Well, no matter what it costs to you or anybody else, we make Mrs. Knollys *eat* those lying words she said about my Emmy. So.

[KRELLIN *exits through the hall door.*]

[LAWRENCE *stands perplexed for a moment, then goes decidedly to the 'phone and rings up.*]

LAWRENCE

Hello — give me one-four-three-three Plaza — yes — in a hurry, please.

[*Pause.*]

Central, they *must* answer. It's a private wire and they are expecting me to ring them up.

[*Pause. Then with an exaggerated change to a very polite manner.*]

Oh, hello — Is that you, Caroline? I've been very busy — yes — all afternoon. Yes, I'm so

sorry, but I shan't be able to get back — Nothing's happened to my *voice;* but — ah — the fact is I've had an accident . . . only my ankle — Oh, nothing serious — I'm sure, so don't be alarmed. . . . Yes, getting out of the cab. . . . I'm telephoning from a drug store. . . . Yes, it *is* painful; but I'm sure it's only wrenched. . . . Yes, I'll ring up my doctor as soon as I get home. . . . I shall be quite alone. . . . Please don't worry. . . . Oh, I can tend to everything.

[*Pause.*]

I've already telephoned to Mrs. Millette. . . . Mercy, no, I wouldn't have a nurse touch me. . . . Yes, I'll telephone in the morning . . . yes, then as soon as he has left, I'll ring you up and tell you what his diagnosis is. . . . Hildegarde? . . . No, I haven't seen her. . . . Oh, not because of anything that happened here. . . . She's — she left this afternoon to spend the week-end with some friends — yes — somewhere in the country — Westchester. . . . No, I shan't send for her. . . . Yes, if there's anything — but — Oh, thank you so much. . . . Good-by.

[*He rings off. During the last part of the above speech,* HILDEGARDE *has quietly entered from the hall door.*]

LAWRENCE

[*Relieved and confused.*]

Oh — Westchester! — I mean, I've just been telephoning.

HILDEGARDE

I didn't expect to see you this evening.

[*She goes to her typewriting desk for some letters, etc.*]

LAWRENCE

Well, there was something in the sound of your voice over the 'phone that made me nervous; and I lied out of my engagements. As usual, said the first foolish thing that came into my mind. Now I'll have to stick to it, I suppose.

HILDEGARDE

Why do you always lie these days?

LAWRENCE

I never lie to *you*.

HILDEGARDE

Is *that* really the truth?

LAWRENCE

Why, yes!

HILDEGARDE

Why did you say I was in Westchester?

LAWRENCE

I didn't know where you'd gone to, and —

HILDEGARDE

Didn't you say I'd gone to Westchester because you were afraid that Mrs. Knollys would be jealous of your spending an evening alone with me?

LAWRENCE

What have you got in your head?

[*She looks at him. He continues.*]

I had to say something to get out of things. Then I come home and find your bag packed. Where *are* you going?

HILDEGARDE

I think it best I go away a little while.

LAWRENCE

Away? Where to?

HILDEGARDE

I haven't decided. I was going to leave a note for you; but Michael told me you were here; so I —

LAWRENCE

[*Bursting.*]

Michael! Do you know what he's doing? And just now, of all times! When everything depends on Mr. Knollys?

HILDEGARDE

Yes, I advised him.

LAWRENCE

What!

[*Pause.*]

Hildegarde, suppose what Mrs. Knollys said about Emily is true?

HILDEGARDE

[*Turning sharply.*]

Larrie!

LAWRENCE

Well, I said, *suppose* it's true.

HILDEGARDE

It's not. And even if it were, *she's* not the one to make the accusation.

LAWRENCE

Why not?

[*Pause.*]

What's in your mind? *Krellin's* been saying things!

HILDEGARDE

Oh, no.

LAWRENCE

I know it. Why, just a moment ago he said that I was afraid to meet Mr. Knollys.

HILDEGARDE

Afraid? Why?

LAWRENCE

He thinks that I —

[*He hesitates.*]

HILDEGARDE

[*In a level tone.*]

What —?

LAWRENCE

That I've forgotten you.

[*Recklessly.*]

Oh, I don't care what he thinks, except that I don't want *you* to get wrong-headed. I thought at least, *you'd* understand. There's not a thing I've done that anybody can't question.

HILDEGARDE

That's ambiguous, Larrie; but I shan't question you.

LAWRENCE

I mean that anybody can't investigate. I've never *really* lied to you; have I?

HILDEGARDE

No — not lied exactly — just disguised things to make it easier for me. . . . Oh, yes, Larrie, my

clothes, my work, our home, our life together, *your* work and all the circumstances and people that have come between us.

LAWRENCE

Oh, those things! I don't mean them.

HILDEGARDE

What do you mean?

LAWRENCE

[*Blurting it out.*]

I mean Car— Mrs. Knollys. That's what *you* mean; and that's what Krellin means.

HILDEGARDE

[*Tremulously.*]

Yes.

[*She turns away.*]

LAWRENCE

I want to explain everything, right from the beginning — everything.

[*She moves away. He follows.*]

I want you to know the whole truth, and nothing *but* the truth; and then you can judge for yourself. Oh, I'm not proud of what I've had to do; but there isn't a single thing that you can't know about — or that I'm really ashamed of — I swear!

[*There is a knock at the hall door.* LAWRENCE, *after a gesture of impatience, continues:*]

If that's Krellin, tell him I want to be alone with you. He can't telephone. He's got to leave Mr. Knollys out of this. I don't want Knollys to get wrong-headed too!

[*He has followed* HILDEGARDE *who has moved up to the door.*]

HILDEGARDE

[*At door, to* LAWRENCE.]

Please!

[*She opens the door and discovers* HUBERT KNOLLYS *standing there.*]

HUBERT

[*To* HILDEGARDE.]

I couldn't find the bell.

LAWRENCE

[*Retreating.*]

Oh, Lord!

HUBERT

Mrs. Sanbury, I'm very glad to see you.

[*Extends his hand. She takes it.*]

HILDEGARDE

I've been hoping you'd come.

[LAWRENCE *is surprised.*]

HUBERT

Thank you.

LAWRENCE

Yes — we —

HUBERT

[*Laconically to* LAWRENCE.]

Oh — how are you?

LAWRENCE

[*Embarrassed.*]

Oh, finely . . . been pretty busy since you left; but —

HUBERT

[*Abruptly.*]

Yes, so I hear.

[*He turns to* HILDEGARDE *and points to a chair.*]

May I?

HILDEGARDE

[*Nodding.*]

Let me take your things.

[LAWRENCE *takes his hat and coat.*]

HUBERT

[*Sitting and speaking to* HILDEGARDE.]

I've just got back from the South.

LAWRENCE

[*Effusively.*]

Yes, we heard you were away.

HUBERT

[*Turning quietly.*]

I was rather of the opinion that you *knew* I was away.

LAWRENCE

Yes, to be sure — of course. Did you have a successful trip of it?

HUBERT

[*Ironically.*]

Have you had time to read the papers?

LAWRENCE

I was interested and all that; though I haven't followed the strike very closely. A little out of my line, you know. So if you're going to talk economics, hadn't I better —?

[*He starts toward his room.*]

HUBERT

[*Interrupting.*]

There are some things I wish to discuss with your wife. I'd rather you'd be here. That is, if you don't mind.

LAWRENCE

[*Vaguely.*]

By all means — not at all.

[HILDEGARDE *turns anxiously to* HUBERT.]

HUBERT

[*To* HILDEGARDE.]

You know, it was due a little to your suggestion, I went South.

HILDEGARDE

And?

HUBERT

We've increased the operative's salaries and killed the child labor.

HILDEGARDE

We know about the splendid settlement you forced.

HUBERT

[*Grimly.*]

I couldn't have done it by myself. You opened fire on my competitors. That made it easy. It looked like a general lock-out; so I called a committee of the managers, and we all agreed to meet the strikers' terms. Alone, I would have made a Quixotic failure. Well, we've yielded. You've kept *your* word; I've kept mine. Now we'll see what the workers will do with more money and shorter hours.

Personally, I think they'll invest in more phonographs and liquor; and their children will continue to go barefoot.

HILDEGARDE

Perhaps. But the use of time and money must be learned.

HUBERT

They'll have their chance. Now, for the matter that brings me here immediately.

[*He takes out a letter.*]

I received this by messenger this afternoon — from Miss Madden.

HILDEGARDE

Yes.

HUBERT

Miss Madden urges me to see *you.*

HILDEGARDE

She told me.

HUBERT

So I am here to do anything I can in the way of reparation.

HILDEGARDE

There's only one possible reparation. Your wife must withdraw her statement absolutely. The circumstances are such that —

HUBERT

I know.

HILDEGARDE

What can have been her motive?

HUBERT

There is no question of Miss Madden's innocence. She suffers from two misfortunes. Firstly, she is a very dear friend of mine; and secondly, she was of service to my wife. Gratitude makes some natures resentful. I, however, feel a great obligation to Miss Madden for averting a scandal, that my wife's ignorance of the law nearly precipitated.

HILDEGARDE

Mr. Krellin helped her hush the matter up. But now, unless your wife withdraws her statements, he is determined to publish everything.

HUBERT

So his telegram informed me. But Mr. Krellin's threat could have very little weight either with Mrs. Knollys or with me.

HILDEGARDE

Why?

HUBERT

You must surely see that after doing all he could to keep the matter from the press, it would be ridicu-

lous for Krellin now to make an exposure. His own conduct couldn't stand investigation.

[*Pause.*]

Will not my personal apology for Mrs. Knollys to Mr. Krellin and Miss Madden suffice?

HILDEGARDE

Considering the accusation and the way you are involved, I should say not.

HUBERT

Perhaps you're right.

[*Rises.*]

I suggested it merely to show you how really powerless we are. A money damage for defamation is out of the question —

HILDEGARDE

Quite.

HUBERT

Then what do you propose?

HILDEGARDE

[*Firmly.*]

That right here, and before the very people in whose presence Mrs. Knollys *made* the accusation, she must *retract* and with full apologies. Nothing less.

HUBERT

[*Involuntarily.*]

I'd love to see it!

LAWRENCE

Hildegarde!

HUBERT

[*To* HILDEGARDE.]

Your husband's exclamation proves that he and I know my wife much better than you do, Mrs. Sanbury. *He* appreciates her force of will.

[*To* LAWRENCE.]

Don't you, sir?

[LAWRENCE *looks on guard and says nothing.*]

HILDEGARDE

Is your wife absolutely indifferent to the social consequences of her own conduct?

HUBERT

[*Sitting.*]

Ah! Why do you ask?

HILDEGARDE

Because immediately after having accused Emily, she did her best to make *me* believe my husband had become her lover.

HUBERT

[*Attempting to be surprised.*]

What!!

LAWRENCE

[*Bounding out of his skin.*]

Hildegarde!!

[*To* HUBERT.]

This is outrageous!

HILDEGARDE

Yes.

[LAWRENCE *is open mouthed.*]

HUBERT

[*To* HILDEGARDE.]

Are you sure you're not mistaken?

HILDEGARDE

Oh, no. On the contrary, she took the greatest pains to impress it on me with all the malicious insolence of triumph she could command.

HUBERT

But — why do you tell *me* this?

HILDEGARDE

To ask you to use it as you think best, to help me to force your wife to make just reparation to my friend.

LAWRENCE

[*Finding his voice.*]

It's all a damnable lie! A whole-sale rotten —!

HUBERT

[*Interrupting.*]

Pardon, I should reserve such language until you have a better right to use it.

LAWRENCE

Wh-what do you mean?

HUBERT

Remember, sir, the lady you are speaking of is still *my* wife.

LAWRENCE

[*Wildly.*]

I can't help *that!* I have *my* wife to consider, Mr. Knollys, and —

HUBERT

[*Scornfully.*]

Indeed!

LAWRENCE

[*Continuing.*]

And with all deference to *your* wife, I must repeat that if *your* wife said those things to *my* wife, your wife uttered a lie!!

HILDEGARDE

So I told her myself.

HUBERT

[*Promptly.*]

You did that to shield your husband.

LAWRENCE

[*Vehemently.*]

And I protest that if *your* wife —

HUBERT

[*Sternly to* LAWRENCE.]

Keep quiet!

LAWRENCE

[*Spinning about.*]

For God's sake, some one do me the favor to tell me that one of us is blind or deaf or —

HUBERT

[*Severely.*]

Sit down!!

LAWRENCE

[*Landing into a chair and wailing.*]

She's old enough to be my mother!

HUBERT

[*To* HILDEGARDE.]

Did she say anything further? Come!

HILDEGARDE

She wantonly taunted me with my failure to hold my husband. When I told her I did not believe her, she even urged me to question him. I refused. Please to observe I have not questioned him.

LAWRENCE

[*Imploringly.*]

Oh, why didn't you?

HUBERT

[*To* HILDEGARDE.]

Why did you ***not*** question him?

HILDEGARDE

Because — simply because I did not believe your wife.

LAWRENCE

[*Fervently.*]

Thank God!

HUBERT

But if you do not believe her statements, why repeat them to me?

HILDEGARDE

To serve my friend, I shall deliberately ***choose to believe*** your wife; and if you will help me —

HUBERT

[*Interjecting.*]

Rely on that.

HILDEGARDE

Then I shall act as if everything she said were absolutely true.

LAWRENCE

Oh, Hildegarde! How *can* you!?

HILDEGARDE

[*To* HUBERT.]

In that way we can turn her arrow against Emily into a boomerang to recoil upon herself.

HUBERT

Hum. Then you will name her as a co-respondent?

HILDEGARDE

[*Genuinely frightened.*]

What! You mean divorce my — divorce Larrie?

HUBERT

Yes.

LAWRENCE

[*To* HILDEGARDE.]

See here! *I'm* the one that your damned boomerang is hitting!

HUBERT

[*To* HILDEGARDE.]

That is unavoidable.

LAWRENCE

See here! —

HILDEGARDE

[*Expostulatingly to* HUBERT.]

But don't you see that I do *not* believe her. She did it to provoke a jealous quarrel; and if I judge her rightly, she will withdraw her insults rather than endure disgrace. It won't have to go that far! D-Don't you see that?

HUBERT

Thank you for your assurance, but I must differ with you.

LAWRENCE

[*To* HUBERT.]

Why? — do you think that I —?

HUBERT

[*Calmly.*]

I think there is an important person that you both have so far overlooked — myself.

[*To* LAWRENCE.]

You have chosen to protect my wife by calling her a liar.

[*To* HILDEGARDE.]

You protect your husband by calling her a liar, too. It seems *my* attitude has been neglected.

[HILDEGARDE *is appalled.*]

LAWRENCE

[*Bravely.*]

Well —?

HUBERT

Yes. Here's where *you* come in.

LAWRENCE

[*Crumpling.*]

What do you intend to do?

HUBERT

I choose to believe these statements for my *own* sake.

HILDEGARDE

You can't! You can't!!

LAWRENCE

[*To* HUBERT.]

You don't mean to say! —

[*To* HILDEGARDE, *wildly.*]

He believes it! He believes it!

HUBERT

[*Quietly.*]

I always believe my wife when she affirms, *never* when she denies.

HILDEGARDE

[*Stupefied.*]

But, Mr. Knollys, you don't *really* think that . . .

HUBERT

[*Interrupting.*]

My dear lady, you are too gullible.

[*To* LAWRENCE.]

Now, I want the truth, and I expect it manfully.

[*He approaches* LAWRENCE, *who retreats.*]

LAWRENCE

This is perfectly ridiculous!

HUBERT

[*Taking out a note-book.*]

Please have the courtesy to remember that it is *you* who has made us both ridiculous; and don't thrust it down our throats.

[*Consulting his book.*]

You spent at least a week with Caroline alone in Italy.

LAWRENCE

That isn't true! Susan Ambie . . .

HUBERT

[*Promptly.*]

I have seen Miss Ambie. She did more than confess. She attempted to defend it.

LAWRENCE

Miss Ambie is a fool!

HUBERT

Quite so.

[*Continuing.*]

Do you admit being alone with Mrs. Knollys?

LAWRENCE

[*Pausing.*]

Why — I —

HILDEGARDE

[*Gone white.*]

Don't deny it, Larrie.

HUBERT

[*To* HILDEGARDE.]

I heard you say some weeks ago you had letters to that effect.

LAWRENCE

[*Imploringly.*]

Hildegarde!

HILDEGARDE

Yes. I have them.

HUBERT

Very good. I trust you to produce them at the proper time.

[*To* LAWRENCE.]

You crossed on the same steamer.

LAWRENCE

[*Grasping at a straw.*]

Miss Ambie was with us!

HUBERT

Yes; and since your arrival on October 5th you have devoted all your time, practically day and night, to each other.

LAWRENCE

[*Angrily.*]

I won't stand here and have you say such things about your wife!

HUBERT

Am I to be the only one who does *not* say them?

LAWRENCE

She simply —

HUBERT

[*With feigned anger.*]

Pray do not explain my wife to me.

[*Continuing from his note-book.*]

On October 7th you actually installed yourself under my roof — a most tasteless procedure, which I refused to countenance. I went South. You thought, no doubt, that openness would disarm suspicion. It doesn't work. As part of that same plan, my wife openly confesses her infatuation to your wife, boasts of her power, and then further openly denounces an innocent woman, in order to produce the impression that her own actions are not subject to criticism. Truly, this is the very blindness of infatuation.

[*Laughs.*]

I admire your brass — but really it won't do. The rest of us are not so blind. I compliment you on your conquest [*Ironically*]. But how long did you imagine I would allow this to continue?

LAWRENCE

Mr. Knollys, all that I can say is —

HUBERT

[*Scathingly.*]

At least, sir, have the courage of your actions.

[*Snapping his book closed, and looking at* HILDEGARDE, *who sees she has awakened a Frankenstein.*]

I have a further list of rendezvous, which I shall not ask you to verify in the presence of your wife!

LAWRENCE

My wife knows everything that can be said about me!

HUBERT

I doubt it. In any case, your protection until now has been your wife's credulity. We shall see. When my lawyer —

LAWRENCE

[*Interrupting.*]

All right. *Get* your lawyer. Now I'll thank you, Mr. Knollys, to leave me alone with my wife, who's never doubted me, and has no reason to doubt me now. I *have* the courage of my actions! I'll bring the whole thing right into the open — and if *you* can stand it, *I* can.

[*The two men look each other squarely in the eye. Suddenly the bell rings over the hall door.*]

HUBERT

[*Turning to* HILDEGARDE.]

Is that your bell?

[HILDEGARDE *goes directly to the hall door, opens it and discloses* MRS. KNOLLYS. *She is magnificently dressed in a long opera cloak over her evening gown. She has also a heavy veil about her head.* CAROLINE *enters swiftly, then stands appalled.*]

HUBERT

[*Recognizing her.*]

Ah, Caroline!

[*Surprise of all.* CAROLINE *undoes her veil and faces him.*]

You come most apropos.

[*Sarcastically.*]

Did you call to see *Mrs.* Sanbury?

CAROLINE

[*After a pause.*]

I . . . I have called for *you.*

[*She comes into the room.*]

HUBERT

Indeed! How is that?

CAROLINE

I am on my way to the opera. I assumed that Miss Madden had summoned you. I thought I'd pick you up.

HUBERT

How kind of you. But may I ask why you assumed that I'd be here in Mrs. Sanbury's apartment?

CAROLINE

Quite naturally. Mrs. Sanbury is the only other person interested with you, in deceiving Mr. Krellin and whitewashing Miss Madden.

HILDEGARDE

Mrs. Knollys, my husband telephoned you that I had gone to Westchester; so you couldn't have expected to see *me*.

[LAWRENCE *is desperate.*]

HUBERT

[*To* CAROLINE.]

Oh, you expected to find *Mr.* Sanbury alone.

[*After a glance at* LAWRENCE, *he turns to* HILDEGARDE.]

Well, then, Mrs. Sanbury, let us no longer intrude. Will you direct me to Miss Madden?

HILDEGARDE

[*Moves to the hall door, then turns.*]

Mrs. Knollys, I think it only fair to tell you, that I have repeated to Mr. Knollys the whole substance of your conversation with me this afternoon.

[HUBERT *opens the door.* HILDEGARDE *exits; and he follows, closing the door behind him.* LAWRENCE *is standing stupefied down left.* CAROLINE *is at center. Pause.*]

CAROLINE

[*In an unsteady voice.*]

I think I'm going to faint.

LAWRENCE

[*Putting her into chair at the table, anxiously.*]

Oh, don't! For Heaven's sake, don't do that.

[*She sits.*]

I'll get you a glass of water.

[*He goes quickly to the tubs and pours one out of a bottle. Coming to her.*]

Here, drink this. Is there anything else I can get you?

[*She sips the water.*]

Shan't I send for some one?

CAROLINE

[*Ironically.*]

For whom?

[*She drinks the water.*]

LAWRENCE

You feel better now, don't you? Shall I get you some salts?

[*He moves quickly toward* HILDEGARDE'S *room.*]

CAROLINE

No. I'll be all right.

[*Suddenly.*]

You walk very well.

LAWRENCE

[*Stopping.*]

Why, yes, I — Shall I get you home?

CAROLINE

[*Caustically.*]

No. I have no trouble with *my* ankle.

LAWRENCE

[*Suddenly remembering.*]

Oh, forgive me, Caroline.

CAROLINE

[*In a rage.*]

Don't call me Caroline! I imagined you here alone, in pain, too ill to telephone — I thought you might be glad to see me. I lost my prudence.

[LAWRENCE *turns away.*]

How much of what you've said to me for all these months is true? What did you mean by taking me into your arms to-day and . . . Agh —!!

[*She turns from him.*]

LAWRENCE

[*Simply.*]

I've done a great wrong.

CAROLINE

[*Sarcastically.*]

And when did you discover that?

LAWRENCE

After I kissed you to-day — the way I did.

CAROLINE

That's why you left so suddenly.

LAWRENCE

Yes.

CAROLINE

And came right back to *her?*

LAWRENCE

I tried to find her, but I couldn't. I was frantic. I looked every place. I really thought that she had left me.

[*In a low voice.*]

And I thought that I deserved it. Then I telephoned to you; and she came in.

CAROLINE

The kiss that woke *your* prudence put *mine* to sleep. How strange! And you were thinking all the time of *her!*

[*She laughs hysterically.*]

LAWRENCE

Why, yes. Always! My work, my ambition,—even my gratitude to you has been for her sake.

CAROLINE

Then I was merely the ladder on which you proposed to climb and pluck the golden fruit for *her!*

LAWRENCE

I've been a miserable cad! I know what you must think of me!

CAROLINE

And what do *they* think of you?

LAWRENCE

Oh, how can I tell you? Your husband insists upon putting the worst interpretation upon everything!

CAROLINE

You mean?

LAWRENCE

I did all I could to make him see that he was wrong in doubting *you.*

[*A withering look from* CAROLINE.]

Oh, but what made you tell those outrageous falsehoods about us to Hildegarde!?

CAROLINE

[*Rising in a cold rage.*]

The word falsehood can only be applied to *your* attitude to me. I took you for an artist, eager to rise above and to be free from the commonness and squalor of your surroundings, and I was willing to help you. But I find you only a little entrepreneur, afraid of your conscience, and satisfied with your mutton! Well, return to it!

[*She moves away, then turns.*]

I have one more direction to give you. Kindly refrain from any further defense of me. I wish to speak to my husband. Will you tell him I am waiting?

[LAWRENCE *exits through the hall door.*]

[CAROLINE *pauses in intense thought, then gathers herself together, takes her vanity-box from her opera bag, opens the mirror and scrutinizes herself closely. She adjusts her hair, smooths her eyebrows and puts a little rouge on her lips.*

She regains her absolute composure by a supreme effort. HUBERT *enters. He is very self-possessed.*]

HUBERT

You wished to see me?

CAROLINE

[*Charmingly.*]

I have been waiting.

HUBERT

For what?

CAROLINE

If you've quite finished your visit, I thought perhaps you would enjoy an hour at the opera.

[*She gives him her cloak.*]

HUBERT

[*Taking the cloak.*]

No, thank you.

CAROLINE

You wish to go right home?

HUBERT

For the present I have decided to — ah — live at the club.

CAROLINE

Very well. Can I drop you there?

HUBERT

No.

[*Putting her cloak on a chair.*]

I shall need you here.

CAROLINE

Oh, then our meeting was most fortunate.

HUBERT

Yes. I was wondering how to get you here.

CAROLINE

As it is probably the last time I shall ever come, if there's anything that you would like me to do for you while I am —

HUBERT

[*Interrupting her, admiringly.*]

Caroline, you're magnificent! We'd better get right to the point.

[*Looking at his watch.*]

I needn't detain you very long. I've told Miss Madden and the others to — ah — come downstairs in five minutes.

CAROLINE

[*Acting as if perplexed.*]

I wonder what she can have to say to me; or [*Incredulously*] do *you* want me to meet her again?

HUBERT

I am afraid I shall be obliged to insist upon it. I have already satisfied Mr. Krellin.

CAROLINE

Dear, dear! That must have been fatiguing; but how very nice! I believe he wants to marry her.

HUBERT

Yes.

CAROLINE

A very amusing man. Too bad! But how am I concerned?

HUBERT

In the presence of all the people before whom you made your accusation against Miss Madden, I should like you to retract it and apologize.

CAROLINE

[*Very graciously.*]

My dear Hubert, I consider that you've never had any fault to find with me in any of your former affectionate waywardnesses. Of course, I have regretted them, but my pride has never been involved till now. *This* adventure is different. You might at least have chosen a woman of your class. I closed my eyes even to *this*, until the unfortunate woman was forced upon me in a manner I felt obliged

to resent. I'm very sorry. I know so little of how these people act. You might have put me on my guard. Now you wish me to apologize to her for having said the truth.

[*She laughs.*]

Really, Hubert, don't you think you ask too much?

HUBERT

I have assured them you would do so. That was the purpose of my visit.

CAROLINE

[*Still smiling.*]

I'm very sorry to disappoint the audience and perplex the impresario.

[*Distinctly.*]

You may cut my salary if you like, but I give no performance this evening.

[*Rises.*]

HUBERT

[*Gracefully.*]

Having heard you once, the audience refuses a substitute.

CAROLINE

Then I suggest you reimburse them.

HUBERT

No, that won't do.

CAROLINE

Have you tried?

HUBERT

I explained that you came here with the best intentions, and that you would fulfil their expectations.

CAROLINE

[*Merrily.*]

I couldn't keep my face straight in the tragic parts.

HUBERT

I must really insist that you be serious.

CAROLINE

It's no use my trying.

HUBERT

[*Looking at his watch.*]

We're wasting time.

CAROLINE

Hubert, you're so good-humored, you almost make me feel that you're in earnest.

HUBERT

I am.

CAROLINE

And if I still refuse?

HUBERT

Then you force me to resort to measures that we both decided were ridiculous. I have waited for this moment for twenty-five long years. For all that time *you've* held the whip; *I've* had to canter to your wish. But now, my dear, if you do not retract your statement and protect Miss Madden absolutely, *I* shall sue for a divorce and name your — latest as a co-respondent.

CAROLINE

[*Calmly.*]

You can't.

HUBERT

I have persuaded Mrs. Sanbury to allow me to assume the suit.

CAROLINE

[*Slowly.*]

So, you stand with her.

HUBERT

Precisely.

CAROLINE

I compliment you on your associate.

HUBERT

You left me no choice.

CAROLINE

Well?

HUBERT

It's been your policy to overlook *my* trespasses; but note *I* have not condoned either in private or in public. That is why I do not wish to appear with you in our box to-night — that is why I left your house, as soon as ever I discovered the — intrigue; and I shall not return. Whatever was lacking in my evidence, Mrs. Sanbury and others have supplied.

CAROLINE

Go on.

HUBERT

I should like to settle matters amicably, but really, my dear, it's no longer in my power. If *I* do not sue for the divorce, Mrs. Sanbury *will;* and she will name *you* as a co-respondent. That might be more annoying.

CAROLINE

I have done nothing!

HUBERT

You have always told me that our society deals in appearances; and you have done sufficient here and abroad to create a prima facie case. The burden will rest upon you to prove that we are wrong.

CAROLINE

[*Snapping her fingers.*]

That for your appearances!

HUBERT

They are far more damning than any you may know about me and Miss Madden. Come, you're too much a thoroughbred and too wise a woman not to know when you are beaten.

CAROLINE

[*Leaning forward.*]

Let me understand you. If I give Miss Madden a certificate of virtue, you will withhold the suit. That is your price, is it?

HUBERT

As far as I'm concerned, yes. I can make no bargain for Mrs. Sanbury.

CAROLINE

Then what's the use of my withdrawing anything, if she —?

HUBERT

You will have me *with* you instead of *against* you.

CAROLINE

And what of that?

HUBERT

If I stand by and make no objection to Sanbury's attentions, who else *can?* They become immediately innocent, and her proceeding is discouraged; but if I join with her — which I mean to do unless you meet my terms, you become immediately defenseless and every suspicion is justified.

[*A movement from* CAROLINE.]

Without me, to whom can you appeal for help? To Society? It would rend you and rejoice in it, as you have rended others. You can ill afford to have your name publicly coupled with this young Sanbury's in any dirty proceeding.

CAROLINE

[*Sharply driving a bargain.*]

In other words, if *I* protect Miss Madden from the truth, *you* will protect *me* from a lie.

HUBERT

Precisely; and we all enter into our usual, polite conspiracy of silence. I advise you to reflect.

CAROLINE

[*Rising.*]

I shall. I'll think it over.

[*She sits in the chair down left.*]

HUBERT

[*With his watch.*]

You've just two minutes to decide.

CAROLINE

[*Ominously.*]

Hubert, I advise you not to humiliate me before these people.

HUBERT

It's either these few people here, or the grinning congregation you will be forced to face alone, in your temple of Convention.

[*Pause.*]

I know what this must mean to you.

[CAROLINE *shudders.*]

You've been hard hit to-day.

[*He goes toward her.*]

With all your bravado, I know you're covering a wound. I believe that you seriously cared about this young man. For the first time in your life you've cared about anything outside of yourself. That's why you forgot yourself and went so wrong.

[*She looks up at him.*]

Oh! There's hope in that. I didn't think that it was *in* you. You made yourself vulnerable for

him, and the disillusionment has come, and hurt you far more than you will ever confess.

[*He turns away.*]

And then I'd like to spare you for another reason. After all, you are the mother of my child, and we've negotiated something of a life since we were young together.

[*Pause.*]

CAROLINE

[*Rising.*]

Send them in!

[*He goes to the hall door, opens it and makes a gesture to them outside.*]

HUBERT

[*To* CAROLINE.]

They're coming now.

CAROLINE

[*A malicious expression crosses her face. It passes. She turns and asks:*]

Do you want to stay and see me take my medicine?

HUBERT

[*Bowing.*]

I know that you will do it gracefully.

[LAWRENCE *enters from the hall.* CAROLINE *turns immediately toward the audience.* LAWRENCE

is very uncomfortable as he passes HUBERT. LAWRENCE *is followed by* KRELLIN *and* EMILY. KRELLIN *is uneasily defiant.* EMILY *looks down.* HILDEGARDE *is the last to enter. She looks uncertainly at* HUBERT. CAROLINE *is the only one who is completely self-possessed.* HILDEGARDE *closes the door. The others have gathered awkwardly around the table, center.* CAROLINE *stands in her position down left. There is an awkward pause.* HUBERT *turns to* CAROLINE, *who shrugs her shoulders gaily and turns away.*]

HUBERT

[*To all.*]

Hum — As I explained to you, my wife so much regretted her unfortunate mistake that she was unwilling to allow the night to pass before she came down personally to rectify it.

[*To* KRELLIN *and* EMILY.]

You have assured me that her *personal* retraction will be satisfactory. My wife desires to make it.

KRELLIN

[*Taking out a paper.*]

Mr. Knollys, I have drawn up a paper for your wife to sign.

HUBERT

But —

CAROLINE

Hubert!

[*She passes him and goes to the table, center.*]

KRELLIN

I think that she will find it accurate.

[KRELLIN *puts the paper on the table, center, and takes out his fountain pen, which he lays carefully next to it.* CAROLINE *sits at the table, takes the paper and reads aloud.*]

CAROLINE

"November twenty-ninth, nineteen-fifteen. I, Mrs. Hubert Knollys, having permitted myself to make a certain disparaging, slanderous and criminal statement [HUBERT *would interfere. She continues*] on this date, concerning the chastity of Miss Emily Madden,— in the presence of Mr. Krellin, Mrs. Sanbury and Mr. Sanbury, do herewith wish to recant it absolutely, and to state over my signature that my statement was groundless. To wit: I said that Miss Madden was improperly intimate with my husband, Mr. Hubert Knollys. I now declare this statement to be absolutely false, mistaken and unwarranted. Signed"—

[*She looks up questioningly.*]

[KRELLIN *points to the bottom of the page.*]

Here?

KRELLIN

Please.

CAROLINE

[*While writing.*]

In addition, I wish to make my humble apology for any misinterpretation I may have made in regard to Miss Madden's . . . generous services to my husband and to me. At least I've learned that lies are futile, and that truth crushed to earth will rise again.

[*She rises.* EMILY *sinks down into a chair at the right. The rest of them shift in an embarrassed way.* CAROLINE *folds the signed retraction, leans toward* KRELLIN *and asks gently:*]

CAROLINE

Is there anything else?

[*Pause.*]

LAWRENCE

[*Coming forward.*]

Mrs. Knollys . . .

[CAROLINE *passes him, disdaining to reply. He then turns to* MR. KNOLLYS.]

Considering the circumstances, I think it better that I resign the contract for remodeling your house.

HUBERT

Very well. Then — ah . . . Caroline, if you've quite finished . . . that is . . .

CAROLINE

[*Taking her cloak, which he holds for her.*]

Yes. I told Morgan to wait.

[*With a little shiver.*]

I'm afraid it's raining. Hubert, will you please see if the motor is at the door?

[HUBERT *gives her a swift, suspicious look. She meets his returning glance with an assuring smile. Pause.*]

HUBERT

Yes, certainly.

[*He quickly takes his hat and coat from the hat-rack at the door, then turns.*]

Good night. Good night.

KRELLIN

[*Picking up the signed paper.*]

Good night.

[HUBERT *exits.*]

[CAROLINE *sweeps around as if to follow* HUBERT, *but pauses a second to look mockingly at* EMILY, *who is still seated at the right, with*

bowed head. CAROLINE'S *soft laugh is interrupted by* KRELLIN, *who speaks just as she has got to the door.*]

KRELLIN

Mrs. Knollys . . .

[*She turns in the door, with her hand on the knob.*]

You have signed this paper.

[*Triumphantly.*]

But I wish you to know that, for me, this was not in the least necessary. I had no belief whatever in your assertions. It was only because they distressed Miss Madden that I exacted this satisfaction.

CAROLINE

[*Graciously.*]

Quite so . . . *Quite* so. It's a pity that I cannot go further and silence all rumors about a little trip on the Chesapeake, Miss Madden made with Mr. Knollys on his yacht . . .

[*Looking at* EMILY.]

Or any malicious innuendoes about my husband's too frequent visits at odd hours to her apartment in East Thirtieth Street.

[*A movement from* KRELLIN.]

Don't be alarmed! When rumors of this kind come to you, I want you to feel sure that I am al-

ways at your service to help you to discredit them.

[EMILY *has cowered under* CAROLINE'S *speech.* KRELLIN *starts for the door with an inarticulate cry of rage and surprise.*]

CAROLINE

[*Very graciously.*]

Good night.

[*She closes the door behind her.*]

KRELLIN

Stop! Wait!!

[EMILY *has quickly risen, and intercepts him.*]

EMILY

Michael! Please!

KRELLIN

But, Emmy, this is worse!!

EMILY

You can do nothing more!

KRELLIN

This time I'll . . .!

EMILY

No, no! I'm done for! I've got to give you up! What she said is true!!

KRELLIN

What!?

HILDEGARDE

Oh!

EMILY

I couldn't have stood it any longer! I'm glad the truth is out!! . . . I'm glad . . .

[KRELLIN *makes over to her, takes her by the shoulders and peers into her face. She sinks under his gaze. He recoils with an almost savage exclamation.*]

HILDEGARDE

Stop, Michael!

KRELLIN

[*Tearing up the retraction.*]

Women! Women!

[*Then, with a bitter cry.*]

Faith is a virtue only when it is *blind;* and then it makes a fool of you . . . a fool!

EMILY

No, Michael, *I'm* the fool! I should have trusted you . . . I should have told you everything. *You* would have understood. But how can you forgive me for the *lie* I've *acted!*

[*She goes toward him.*]

But don't . . . don't lose your faith in other women, because *I've* been a fool . . .

[*She turns sobbing toward the door.*]

Yes, I'm the fool . . . I'm the fool . . .

[*She exits.*]

HILDEGARDE

Michael, go with Emily.

KRELLIN

[*With infinite pity.*]

So, my poor little Emmy. Oh, we primitive males! We create idols, and when the truth comes, what do we find? Only pitiful humanity!

[*He goes to the door and turns with a wry smile.*]

But you see, all of us together, fighting blindly, were not strong enough to fight against the *truth!*

[*He suddenly breaks out into an hysterical laugh.*]

God is a great humorist! . . . A great humorist!!

[*He exits through hall door.*]

[*As soon as the door closes on* KRELLIN, HILDEGARDE *also breaks out into a bitter laugh of disillusionment.*]

LAWRENCE

[*Frightened at her laughter.*]

How can you laugh?

HILDEGARDE

Because I too have been a fool! And when one's faith is dead, one needs a sense of humor.

[*Grimly.*]

So, she spoke the truth, your friend Mrs. Knollys — the truth about *you* as well.

LAWRENCE

Hildegarde, if she told you that I had ever been unfaithful to you, she lied.

HILDEGARDE

Did she lie when she said your nature couldn't stand poverty — that you couldn't work in this environment,— that you had to court the rich to get your chance to rise,— that I, with my principles and my work stood in your way? Did she lie about your *character?* Oh, no, she showed me the truth.

LAWRENCE

Hildegarde, you frighten me! How can we live together if you believe such things?

HILDEGARDE

Do you think that I could speak like this, if I didn't realize that we *can't* live together?

LAWRENCE

[*Terrified.*]

Hildegarde!

HILDEGARDE

I see it now. It's been a huge mistake, our marrying. I've got to leave you.

LAWRENCE

Why — why?

HILDEGARDE

You can't live *my* way any more. You've got another call. I won't live *your* way. I try not to judge; but I can't approve of what you do.

LAWRENCE

Then you really believe all that she said about me!

HILDEGARDE

How little you understand!

LAWRENCE

But she lied — she lied!!

HILDEGARDE

I know she's neither big enough nor small enough to really give herself; but there's much more at stake than physical fidelity. She's seduced you away from your *self*,— from every ideal I built my faith in,— from everything that consecrated us.

LAWRENCE

But you're my *wife;* aren't you?

HILDEGARDE

You're not the man I married; and this isn't the kind of life together that we contemplated.

LAWRENCE

[*Agonized.*]

But you love me; don't you?

HILDEGARDE

How far off that sounds!

LAWRENCE

[*Imploringly.*]

What are you *saying!?*

HILDEGARDE

Larrie, you've become a stranger. Something in me has withered. I believe it's dead.

LAWRENCE

No — no,— will you listen?

HILDEGARDE

Oh, don't explain. I've had my fill of that. I'm not blaming you.

LAWRENCE

[*Choking.*]

Listen!

HILDEGARDE

You'll only end by asking for something that I cannot give. I can't help it, Larrie; but the truth is, we don't need or want each other any longer.

LAWRENCE

But I want *you!* I can't live without you. I'd give up everything I ever hoped to get, to have you happy as you were!

HILDEGARDE

We never used to think about happiness. It just came.

LAWRENCE

[*With a cry.*]

I wish I'd never met her! It's all been futile!

HILDEGARDE

No. It hasn't been. She's taught us both a great deal.

LAWRENCE

What's the good of that, if I've lost *you?*

HILDEGARDE

[*Continuing.*]

And then I like to think the factory people are a little happier for our knowing Mr. Knollys.

LAWRENCE

[*Reproachfully and helplessly.*]

How cruel you are! What do I care about all those things? It's only *you*, Hildegarde!

[*Going to her.*]

You! You!

[*Tearfully.*]

You're all I want!

[*Weeping.*]

If I lose you, what will become of me?

[*Clutching her childishly and accusingly.*]

I'll just lose myself!

[*Shaking her.*]

Don't you see that I *belong* to you? Don't you see *that!?* Don't punish me any more.

[*Hoarsely shaken with sobs, he falls and clutches her knees.*]

You can't treat me like this! I can't stand it! I've been wrong; but don't punish me for what I couldn't help!

[LAWRENCE *has delivered this last speech in a torrent of choking tears and with a sobbing incoherent vehemence.*]

HILDEGARDE

Larrie — Larrie. . . . Don't be absurd.